



UNIT CAMPAIGN GAINS SUPPORT

Report by Naomi Penrose

A HEALTH expert has praised online campaigners battling to halt plans to downgrade Oswestry's maternity unit.

More than 1,300 people have so far backed the Facebook campaign.

The Save Oswestry Maternity Unit Facebook page, set up by mum-of-four Liz Grayston, has attracted the support of parents who have used the facility, based at Oswestry Orthopaedic Hospital. And over the past few days campaigners have also launched a petition which attracted more than 800 signatures in about 12 hours. If that petition reaches 100,000 signatures, it will be considered for debate in Parliament. The proposed change would mean mothers would be unable to have overnight stays for rest and recuperation, and those in labour out-of-hours would telephone an on-call midwife to open the unit up.

Gill George, chair of Shropshire Defend Our NHS, said the Facebook campaign was a testament to the service the unit provides for mothers and families, with many taking to the Facebook page to share their personal stories as to how the facility helped them during their first days of motherhood.

Impressive

Ms George said: "This really is an impressive and beautiful campaign from the people of Oswestry, in particular young mums, who are passionate about their maternity unit. Some of the stories that are coming out from this are just heart-wrenching. One that's particularly struck a chord was from one mum who said that a midwife at the unit picked up on that her little boy's breathing went off in the night. That could've been missed if she was on her own. Post-natal care is being completely disregarded, with cuts being put before care."

As well as Oswestry's unit, Shrewsbury and Telford Hospitals NHS Trust's board has suggested the Ludlow and Bridgnorth units could also become reduced-hours "birthing centres" to save on costs. A contract for next year's service is due to be signed by Friday. "It's fabulous to see communities in not just Oswestry but also Ludlow and Bridgnorth coming together to sing the praises of their midwife-led units and ensure their voices are heard," Ms George said.

Mrs Grayston used the unit three out of the four times after she'd given birth. She said: "The unit provides an incredible service to not just new mums but also mums who have had children before because although they've been through the experience of childbirth, you have to remember every child is different."

Sarah Jamieson, head of midwifery at the hospital trust, said a review of services had followed a shift in choices made by women over where they gave birth. She said: "This means that we would retain the full range of services offered by midwife-led units but we would not remain open overnight, instead operating through an on-call system."

People can sign the online petition by visiting <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/175669>

African schools project now has charity shop



Lynn and Bill Morris have opened a charity shop in Oswestry for the Kenyan Schools Project. Photo: Jamie Ricketts.

A COUPLE whose holiday in Kenya led to 12 years of fundraising have opened a shop to help children in the country.

Bill and Lynn Morris, who live in Oswestry, created the Kenyan Schools Project to fund the building and equipping of school classrooms.

Their charity has donated everything from paper and pens to hundreds of desks and even the electricity supply, not only to schools but also to orphanages. The charity project is overseeing the construction of a toilet block at the Kinarini Primary School near Kwale. Here the charity also funds desks for the classroom through its sponsor a desk project. Bill and Lynn's latest venture is a charity shop in Bailey Street in Oswestry.

They admitted they never dreamt they could become so involved in helping children in Africa. They signed up to visit a school during a dream holiday to Kenya in 2004. "We didn't know that this visit would go on to change our lives forever," Bill said.

"The school was called 'The Mkwakwani School' and when we saw what the children had to put up with just to go and learn, we were so shocked. The children were sitting on concrete floors, barefoot and having to share pencils, paper and books. After seeing the school, which, at that time had 1,500 pupils aged between three and 13 years, we then met the headmaster and his deputy and promised we would try and raise some funds for them upon our return to the UK.

"The trip to the school really got to both of us, and we could not stop thinking about the children. We were going to keep our promise."

The couple returned to their then home in Ellesmere and Bill who then ran a mobile disco, put on an event to raise some money for the school.

They made £500 and used it to buy pens, paper and other supplies. They decided to see if they could sponsor some desks and from there things snowballed until in 2004 the Kenyan Schools Project was launched.

"We thought a charity shop would be a great way to raise more, much needed funds," Lynn said. "People have been very generous in both donating items for us to sell and in supporting the shop."

DEMOCRACY

Trial will see public ask questions at full council meeting

POWYS residents will be able to ask questions in a full county council meeting in January as part of a ground-breaking trial.

Earlier this year the county council backed a proposal to let members of the public ask a question at a meeting of the full council as a trial with the first opportunity to take place on January 26.

A question can be asked by anyone, other than a member of council, who lives, works or studies in Powys. Anyone under 18 will have to have the consent of a parent or guardian to attend the web-cast meeting and questions can only be directed to a cabinet member or chair of committees.

Questions cannot be asked of the chairs of the planning, taxi, licensing and Rights of Way committee and the licensing committee because they are regulatory committees. Council Leader Barry Thomas said: "This is a ground-breaking trial for the county council with members of the public being allowed to ask questions for the first time ever. Residents have been able to speak at planning meetings for some time but that was restricted to specific applications."

"The trial will allow participants to submit one question on any subject that relates to service provided by the county council or on behalf of the county council." Potential questions have to be submitted by 5pm on January 11.

ECONOMY

Street re-opening to be discussed

PLANS to re-open a town centre street to traffic will be discussed in the new year.

Shropshire Council Deputy Leader Steve Charmley said members of Oswestry Townscape and Transport Forum will discuss a possible trial of opening up Cross Street.

He said: "I know members of the forum are due to come back in January with some conclusions as to what roads in Oswestry need reviewing, and I think that will be when the Cross Street plan will move forward." He said the pedestrianised area of town had been "struggling" for a number of years.

INSIDE

Students show off panto skills



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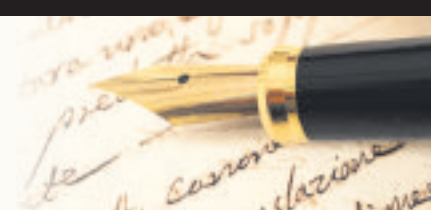
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Support builds for firm's retrospective planning bid

Report by Sue Austin

A TOURIST attraction which has been operating without planning permission has won support from local residents.

The British Ironwork Centre in Aston, near Oswestry, has been a massive boost to the economy of Oswestry those who want to see permission granted, have said.

Owners of the centre have applied to Shropshire Council under the company name, Black Country Metal Works Ltd, for retrospective planning permission.

The application is for change of use of land and buildings; erection of extensions to form enterprise centre; formation of visitor parking areas, camping field, nature reserve and children's play area; provision of external display areas and alterations to existing access and internal drives.

Shropshire Council will have to decide whether to grant permission for the centre, which attracts thousands of visitors each week, and allow it to continue to operate.

In the days since the application was lodged letters have been sent to the council pointing out its importance to the area.

Former businessman, Peter Starbuck, said the centre and arts and tourism venue was entirely self-funded.

"The centre has won community awards and has been awarded tourism honours and perhaps its most important contribution to the area is as the biggest employer on the east side of Oswestry," he said.

Part of the centre is given over to artisan units with up and coming businesses allow to work from the units rent free.

Florist Hazel Wakefield said that the chance to set up her business without rental costs had made the difference to her moving forward.

"The support has been invaluable and I believe unique in Shropshire," she said.

Another artist and inventor, Peter Morris, said that the British Ironwork Centre had helped him to progress his work.

He said: "It has enabled me to become involved in bigger and bolder projects."

Support has also come from Oswestry Chamber of Commerce and several charities that are helped by events and fundraising at the centre.

Neil Jenkins, chairman of Oswestry Chamber, said the attraction had led to large numbers of people come to Oswestry, he said.

Doris, 105, gives her hints for a long life



Doris Morris with senior care assistant Claire Jones celebrates her 105th birthday

NO smoking and no drinking alcohol are the key to a long life, according to Doris Morris, who has celebrated her 105th birthday.

Doris marked her amazing milestone among her family and friends with a special party held in her honour.

When asked what was the secrets of her long life are, Doris said: "No smoking or

drinking, the support of a loving family, good living and to help one another. The highlight of my life was having my children, Beryl and Gerald."

Doris worked on the family farm in her twenties and then worked as a carer, looking after a lady in her home.

She said: "I would walk or bike to the lady's home from Rhoswel to Bronygarth,

which was about three miles away. I was very proud of this and enjoyed caring for someone else, which I did for a few years until I had children."

"I would sew and knit all the clothes for her children as times were hard back then," she said. A party was held at The Court Nursing and Residential Home, West Felton near Oswestry, where Doris now lives.

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Drivers hit with fines over parking

FIVE motorists will have to pay almost £4,000 in fines and court costs over £50 parking ticket infringements.

They were brought to court after being slapped with a ticket in car parks in Oswestry. The vehicles were among six parked illegally where no parking fees had been paid.

All five were prosecuted in their absence by Shropshire Council as part of a crackdown on motorists who fail to pay up or reply to warning letters.

Each of the those brought to court involved faced an offence for failing to identify the driver, to give information relating to the identification of the driver of a motor vehicle.

The infringements happened between April and August this year.

The cases were found proved against Mrs AC Hughes of Llansantffraid; Ms M Jones of Pen-y-Bont; Mr R Roberts, of Llangedwyn; Mr Ivaylo Tsvetanov of Oswestry and Mr S Hall, of Duddleston Heath.

All could have escaped with a £50 fine had they paid it promptly. But now they face having to pay almost £800 each. For the offence each were ordered to pay £780 each, comprising a fine of £600, £80 compensation, £40 costs and £60 victims' surcharge.

A sixth defendant, a woman from Wrexham, had recently contacted the parking enforcement team and paid the penalty fee.

Pub's toy appeal is running again

A VILLAGE pub has organised a toy collection for Hope House Children's Hospice.

The Plough Inn at Weston Rhyn, near Oswestry, has a long-held tradition of asking its regulars and people in the community to donate a toy or a children's game or book to its appeal at Christmas.

Toys for all ages, from babies to teenagers, are welcomed. Louise Corfield, from the hospice in Morda, said: "We are very grateful to those at the Plough Inn who every year provide the hospice with some wonderful Christmas presents."

Donations can be dropped off at the pub. Staff at Hope House are busy preparing for Christmas.

Many children and young people enjoy respite care at the hospice at this time of year.

● Panto – See Page 18

Call for expert advice on spending windfall

Report by Naomi Penrose

AN independent expert should be brought in to come up with a plan on how Oswestry Town Council's multi-million pound Smithfield development windfall is spent, it has been claimed.

Discussions about Oswestry Town Council's £4 million payment has taken place among members of Oswestry and District Civic Society.

The funds come from the deal the council struck for the redevelopment of the Smithfield site off Shrewsbury Road. The deal has brought about a new state-of-the-art livestock market but other plans for a new supermarket and cinema have stalled.

Among the civic society's suggestions is a move to change permission of the Smithfield to mixed use and away from a large supermarket plus ancillary stores.

Other ideas is for a project to cover Cross Street with a tent-type structure to make it more appealing as a shopping area and establishing a light rail link between Gobowen and Oswestry.

Society chairman and businessman Saffron Rainey believes an independent expert is needed to help councillors and stakeholders forge a plan as to how the money should be spent. He said: "A plan needs to be formed but one that creates a pathway to both investment and improvement. I believe this expert should be external to the town completely, perhaps even Shropshire."

"Without this external view, we could be in danger of the money being spent on just how councillors want it spent, we need the expertise to have a plan that will have a long-term effect."

Mr Rainey said he and fellow members believed spending the sum on achieving longer-term economic benefits for the town by improving the town's environment and user experience would generate the best outcomes for the town. He said: "Oswestry has some excellent assets and has so much going for it but, unfortunately, is operating on a low capacity, rather than its full potential. That windfall could make a huge difference."

Oswestry Town Clerk David Preston said some of the funds had been spent on the refurbishment of Gatacre Pavilion as a community and sporting resource. Other plans include possible land exchanges and a garden of remembrance.

Big gathering for birthday celebrations



Celebrating with Rita Evans on her 105th birthday were, from left, Chirk Court housekeeper Julie Roberts, care practitioner Victoria Jacobs, activities co-ordinator Mandi Southern, Wrexham Mayor Cllr John Pritchard, Chirk Court deputy manager Dewi Tudor-Owen and Eurwen Edwards

RITA Evans has celebrated her 105th birthday, surrounded by family members.

Mrs Evans has 10 grandchildren, 15 great grandchildren and nine great, great grandchildren – 34 in total.

She celebrated her special birthday at the Chirk Court care home in Chirk, with visits from dignitaries including Councillor John Pritchard, mayor of Wrexham, Dr Sarah Horrocks, chairman of Clwyd Alyn Housing Association and Eurwen Edwards, honorary president of the Pennaf Housing Group.

Mrs Evans was adopted by a

childless couple at the age of just three months. Born in Swansea, Rita's adoptive mother later gave birth to her sister Eileen and the family moved to Mid Wales.

When asked the secret to her long life, Mrs Evans's daughter Marian Pearce said: "Mum's a great believer in hard work – and carbolic soap!"

She went to work as a parlour maid when she was 14 years old. She left after two years and worked for a dentist looking after his children for three years before going back into domestic service until she got married at the age of 21.

Mrs Evans and her husband Gwyn were married in 1932 and she went to live in the Rhonda Valley with Gwyn's family. They had two children while living in South Wales, Iris and Derek.

The family left Rhonda as the mines closed, moving to Chirk when Mr Evans secured work as a miner at Black Park Pit. They went on to have two other children, Keith and Marian. When Black Park closed, Mr Evans went to work for McAlpines but sadly passed away in 1963.

Mrs Evans moved to Chirk Green in 1964.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Rider is knocked off bike by lights

A MOTORCYCLIST was knocked off his bike by Christmas lights stretched across the road in a village.

The rider fell, hurting his arm, but escaped serious injury because he was travelling at low speed. Police say it happened on Station Road in Weston Rhyn, near Oswestry, at about 5pm on Thursday last week.

Meanwhile, police are appealing for information after a "suspicious vehicle" was spotted around a housing estate. Officers say a small hatchback vehicle, with at least two men in it, were seen in the Hampton Rise area of Oswestry, at about 10pm on December 13.

PCSO Andy Neeves, based at Oswestry Police Station, said: "The vehicle made off at speed without its lights on, and a male was seen running after it."

Woman injured in attack in pub

A WOMAN needed medical treatment after she was attacked on the dance floor of a pub.

The victim, a woman in her 20s, was standing on the dance floor at the Boars Head in Oswestry between 1am to 1.15am on Sunday. She was approached by another woman and was assaulted. The victim fell to the floor, where her attacker then assaulted her to her head before leaving the scene.

The victim sustained injuries to her face. The suspect is described as a white woman in her early 20s, of a petite build, approximately 5'6" tall with brown hair. She was described as looking "natural" and not wearing a lot of make-up, and she was possibly wearing a ring on her right hand.

Fellowship to hold its annual meeting

THE Oswestry Group of the Civil Service Retirement Fellowship will be holding its annual general meeting on January 3.

This will be held at the Wynnstay Hotel, Oswestry, starting at 11am and followed by lunch at noon.

The Fellowship is a local group for government and other pensioners who are welcome to attend the meetings, which are usually held on the first Tuesday of each month at the Wynnstay Hotel, Oswestry, starting at 10.30am after coffee.

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Waste concerns voiced as fly-tipping levels rise

Report by Sally Williams

REDUCED bin collections and too much non-recyclable rubbish is contributing to the rise in fly-tipping, the Mayor of Welshpool has said.

Councillor Steve Kaye spoke as figures show that fly-tipping is on the rise in Powys following eight years of decline.

Councillor Kaye blames a profusion of non-recyclable products, together with cuts to Powys County Council's refuse collection service, for the growing Powys-wide problem.

Households now have a collection every three weeks instead of two. Councillor Kaye says many householders don't have big enough bins to accommodate three weeks of crammed family rubbish and fears the problem will get worse if proposed closures to local recycling centres go ahead.

Authorities 'can share to save cash'

THE last thing the residents of Shropshire and Telford need is a costly council re-organisation, a councillor has claimed.

Shrewsbury MP Daniel Kawczynski and North Shropshire MP Owen Paterson have both suggested that the county could save money by having just one unitary authority.

But Shropshire Councillor Duncan Kerr said this would create an even more remote authority. The councillor for Oswestry South said: "Shropshire and Telford are facing financial melt-down as a result of government intransigence to fund the care services our elderly people deserve."

"The 17 per cent rise in council tax needed to fund adult services is there because of the seven year council tax freeze the Conservatives chose to implement."

"The main political parties have abjectly failed both Shropshire and Telford. The way forward is quite obvious, not a costly re-organisation but an insistence that the two organisations get round a table and work together to cut costs by sharing services. In Shropshire's case it would also help to cut the £1 million plus they spend on councillor allowances. I said precisely this when I was elected to Shropshire Council earlier this year, pointing out that since 2012 the Government has urged them to share services. Unfortunately both councils have chosen to put political dogma ahead of public services and the costs of this failure are born by the weakest in our community."

The report comes at a time when Powys is considering the closure of a household waste recycling centre in either Newtown or Welshpool, the only two remaining in Montgomeryshire after Machynlleth's Pottery Yard was closed in January 2015.

Councillor Kaye said: "If we are going to get rid of this problem, Powys County Council needs to go to the Welsh Government and tell them to talk to big businesses about them still producing non-recyclable plastics that can only end up in landfill."

"Families have one non-recyclable bin for three weeks' rubbish. However hard they try to recycle, there is still so much non-recyclable packing around food and products that one bin is simply not big enough."

"You have to squash the bin bags down and there is still isn't enough room, so where can people take these overflowing bin bags and what can be done with this waste?"

"If you have people with extra waste they don't know what to do with then fly-tipping will increase."

"We need larger bins if collections are going to continue to be every three weeks and far less non-recyclable packaging."

"Ideally, most packaging now should be biodegradable."

"The transportation alone of rubbish costs a fortune."

It cost taxpayers an average of £61 each time the council had to respond to the 1,019 reports of fly-tipping. Fly-tipping is a criminal activity punishable by fines of up to £50,000 or prison and culprits also face a tax under the Welsh Government's new Landfill Disposals Tax Bill. Across Wales, the number of incidents has almost halved in recent years, but the past year's spike will be a cause for concern. Estimated clearance costs have risen from £1.8m to £2.1m comparing year-on-year figures.

Valuable bikes stolen in raid



Louis Meade on the competition bike that was stolen in the raid

A MOUNTAIN bike champion has had his prized cycles stolen in a raid on his home.

Thieves stole eight bicycles and one motorcross bike from a shed at Louis Meade's family home near Meifod.

They included the teenager's training bike and his competition bike, worth thousands of pounds.

Louis, 18, was crowned junior Welsh mountain bike champion last season and is in the top six in the junior section of the sport in the UK.

Competition has taken him across Britain as well as Austria and Switzerland.

Louis said: "Mum when to the shed last Wednesday and discovered the locks were broken."

"The thieves took eight bikes including

my parents' bikes and my brother's new motorbike."

He said his bikes stolen included his racing bike, a black, Solid Strike WC machine and his white training bike.

"I am devastated," he said.

"Bikes have always been my passion and I simply can't afford this loss."

The two brothers, both students at Llanfyllin High School, hope that by publicising the break-in and sharing it on social media they will track down the culprits.

The burglars, who smashed locks to get into the shed overnight on December 12-13 also stole his younger brother's motorcross motorcycle. Felix Meade, 15, was due to take part in an enduro race this weekend but had to pull out.

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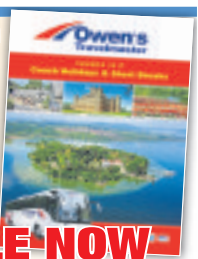
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BREEZE ABOUT TOWN

Having celebrated winning a seat on Powys County Council to represent the people of Welshpool's Llanerchydol Ward last weekend I now start the challenge to avoid the record of becoming the county's shortest serving councillor – that's because I'll have to do it all again at the May elections.

It's an unusual situation to be in, but it seems the law decrees that a by-election had to be held to fill the vacancy created by the passing of Councillor Ann Holloway if there was more than a six-month gap between her death and an election date. I'm sure my Conservative and Liberal Democrat "friends" will be launching campaigns in a bid to bestow me with that unwanted honour.

Fighting a county council by-election as an Independent candidate against political opponents has proved an interesting, illuminating and costly challenge. Canvassing costs had to come from my own wallet, unlike opponents who seemed to have bottomless pockets in contributing to the nation's paper mountain with endless streams of leaflets – not to mention the telephone calls.

It was pleasing to see that the people of my ward were not influenced though and I will do my best to repay the faith that they have placed in me by representing their needs and views at County Hall – and it seems those needs are currently being ignored.

There seems to be evidence that Powys County Council really has the knives out for Welshpool. First we discover plans to close the town's recycling centre and then plans to close the town's council offices in Severn Road.

The problems caused by the proposed closure of the household waste recycling centre have already been well chronicled but the economic effects of scrapping the historic "County Offices" are yet to become evident. First there's the expected loss of jobs to consider and secondly the impact on local businesses where council staff spend their cash. History tells us that centralisation of business does have an immediate impact on costs but over time those costs return and more importantly standards of service vanish forever. Welshpool deserves better because council tax will rise again – meaning we will pay more for a lot less. What the people of Welshpool find hard to take is that Powys County Council is doing less for the town but will expect its residents to pay more tax. "How does that work?" was the constant theme when I visited doorsteps and I didn't have an answer. But I'll pretty soon be looking for those answers. I'm relishing the opportunity to ask some probing questions but I'm also well aware that I am only one voice in a very large congregation.



Head lampman Harry Roberts checks the unused miners' lamps after the closure of Ifton in 1968



The last shift at Ifton Colliery in 1968. Harry Richards from Weston Rhyn is fifth from the left



Ifton Colliery was one of Shropshire's last mines to close, shutting down in 1968

New project will mark the end of an industrial era

TOBY NEAL tells of the closure in 1968 of Ifton Colliery and a new project marking its shutdown

A PICTURE captures the day that Ifton Colliery died, showing some of the men who worked on the last shift in 1968.

One of them, fifth from left carrying the safety lamp and ambulance box containing basic first aid necessities, was Harry Richards, who had invested his working life in the pit, working underground for 41 years.

"I was going to make it my career," joked Mr Richards, recalling those days in a 1999 interview, when he was 85.

Ifton was one of Shropshire's last surviving pits.

After its shutdown it was little over a decade before the other few survivors shut down too.

Those closures brought an end to all deep coal mining in the county of Shropshire.

An Ifton Colliery Commemorative Project has been set up to mark the forthcoming 50-year anniversary of the mine closure.

Ex-miners want to commemorate the passing of time and to preserve the history of the area and the era.

As to that last day, Mr Richards recalled: "Not many turned up for work that afternoon. There were geological problems.

"It was losing money, I suppose. There was another problem – heating, as they call it.

"They didn't mention the word fire. That was giving trouble in different parts."

He was in his mid-50s when the shutdown came and, like the other miners, he was left looking for another job.



The writing's on the wall... miners look at the closure notice

"Everybody used to say almost every day of their lives they wished it closed tomorrow," he said. "As soon as it closed, they were at a loose end.

"They didn't know what else to do.

Employment

"Cadbury's started up in Chirk and that provided employment for a lot of people who were younger.

"I had a couple or three jobs before I settled into something.

"I had three years at the orthopaedic hospital as a porter.

"It was a much better job than mining, where everything depended on production."

"My father was a miner, and my brothers," said Mr Richards, of Weston Rhyn.

"That was all there was in Ifton –

farm work or pit work." He started as a boy, aged 14. "Opening doors was my first job.

"The doors controlled the air.

"They had to be opened and closed to allow the tubs, the trucks, to pass through.

"I was also uncoupling tubs and horse driving. There were ponies and stables down there.

"They used to bring the ponies up very occasionally when there was a day or two off."

He advanced to do other jobs, like engine driving when the ponies went.

"Then you get to the face eventually, shovelling.

"Then I was a deputy for the last 20-odd years."

Did he enjoy the job?

"It was all we ever did, wasn't it? I didn't know much about any other jobs

until the pit closed. There was a certain amount of comradeship."

He served the maximum 15 years as a volunteer in the rescue brigade and although not involved in any life-saving incidents, he tackled a number of fires.

After finding new work when the pit closed he retired at the age of 64.

Ifton pit near St Martins was first sunk in 1913 as the "Gertrude Pit" of Brynkinnall Colliery, owned by WY Craig and Son, of Preesgweene, Oswestry. Eventually Brynkinnall ceased and the men were transferred to Ifton. In 1914, 930 were employed, of whom 741 were underground. Gas, house and steam coal was produced.

In 1938 the number of men had risen to 1,186. The pit closed on November 23, 1968. It had been making big losses.

The shutdown put between 400 and 500 men out of work, with up to 200 more joining them when salvage work finished.

A statue could be built to mark the half century anniversary of the closure.

The plans are being brought forward by the Ifton Colliery Commemorative Project. Councillor Steve Davenport, who represents St Martins on Shropshire Council, said: "While Ifton Colliery was open, it was the centre of industry in the area.

"It's of utmost importance that the colliery and its workers are commemorated, it's a huge part of the area's history, so I'm glad that the project has been set up and a statue is planned ready for the 50 years since the colliery closed.

Sue Schofield, John Stephens and the rest of the project committee are working extremely hard to make this happen, and I think they deserve recognition for that." In the coming months, project committee members will be encouraging people to get in touch – especially those who have been part of its history or have a connection to it through a family member – with a get together and events planned in the new year.

WORKING FOR YOU



As 2016 draws to a close and we begin to look forward to 2017, there is much to be celebrated. This time last year, I wrote that it was possible that we would have an enormous decision to make on our membership of the European Union. In June more people voted to leave the European Union than have ever voted for any other issue or party in our country's history. We can now take back control of our own laws in our own Parliament, our own money and our own borders.

The appalling, deteriorating mobile phone signal is inconvenient at best, life-endangering at worst. I have met Ministers and the Chief Executives of BT and Openreach. I have apparently written more letters to them than any other MP. I have invited the Chief Executive of Openreach, Clive Selley, to North Shropshire early in the New Year to show him just how bad the situation has become, and to work with him on urgent solutions.

I continue to meet with Ministers and operators as the consultations for the West Coast and the Wales and Borders franchises progress. We must have cleaner and more regular trains providing better services.

The Roads Minister visited North Shropshire last May as part of my campaign to dual the A5 and build the Pant/Llanymynech bypass. His successor, John Hayes, is visiting again this spring. My Oswestry Health Group continues to meet every two months to discuss local health issues. I am exasperated by the either/or of the Future Fit process. It has cost the taxpayer over £2 million and has taken far too long. This month the Shropshire CCGs failed to reach a decision on whether to press ahead with Future Fit. I support the Clinical Commissioning Group's proposal, where the current A&Es will continue to provide 80 per cent of their current services. In addition to these a brand new Emergency Care Centre will be built so that the most traumatic cases are treated locally. We must bring this sort of emergency care, along with top class clinical specialists, back into the county. I also support the proposals to build similar Urgent Care Centres in Oswestry and Whitchurch.

The economy continues to improve. Inflation remains at 0.8 per cent below the Bank of England's target. Unemployment in North Shropshire remains historically low as only 1.4 per cent of the economically active population are claiming benefits.

Lastly, I would like to thank our farmers and food producers. Many have had a difficult year and I hope that, like me, you will make an extra effort to buy their products at every opportunity, especially at this time of the year.

Owen Paterson
North Shropshire MP

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CAN I ENSURE MY WILL ISN'T CHALLENGED IF I LEAVE EVERYTHING TO MY NEW WIFE?

Q: I am a widower and have met a wonderful lady I would like to marry. I am however worried what may happen if I die before her. Her former husband was a scoundrel and left her with almost nothing, so as my children are grown-up and successful I feel it would be more important to look after her in my Will. I don't think my children would contest it if I made her the main beneficiary but is there any way of ensuring her protection just in case?

A: Your plight is one being experienced more commonly these days due to an increase in the divorce rate and the number of people entering into second marriages and relationships that bring with them extended families. Unfortunately it more Wills are also being challenged by offspring who expect to inherit and then find out they haven't. There are time limits for any claim against the estate to be made.

The key is for you to make sure that your intentions are very clear when you make a new Will. So if you want to exclude someone who might otherwise expect to inherit you could explain in your Will why you have made that decision. This is known as making a statement of wishes. Such a statement is recognised by the courts and can therefore avoid any potential dispute and associated legal action being taken.

An alternative is to create a trust within your will allowing your soon to be wife a life interest for the remainder of her lifetime with your children being the ultimate beneficiaries.

Where second families are concerned it is imperative that people take extra care about the drafting of their Will to ensure there can be no question of their intentions. Using a reputable local solicitor to prepare the draft is safest.

This question has been answered by Victoria Wilson, a Partner with GHP Legal. For an appointment visit www.ghplegal.com or contact one of our offices: Oswestry 01691 659194, Chirk 01691 777949, Wrexham 01978 291456, Llangollen 01978 860313. For Personal Injury, Employment and Family matters we offer FREE legal diagnostic clinics every Wednesday at our Oswestry office and every Monday at our Wrexham office, 12-3pm (no appointment necessary). GHP Legal is authorised and regulated by the SRA 51566, and Lexcel Accredited.



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Letters

Make parents pay for children's upkeep

SINGLE parents are owed nothing. The only people responsible for their children are their parents. Children should have good parents and food suppliers. Unknown fathers should also be responsible.

Tax and ratepayers have no responsibility for the production of these single parents' children. They have no choice in their inconsiderate sex or their child production.

When people choose to have sex and produce children then the thoughtless people are responsible to support the children. When they are given these money rewards it only encourages people to have sex and be irresponsible. There are medical ways

to prevent child production. Children are brought up to think that there is no need to work or strive to earn food. They believe that it is right for their welfare to be given to them by hard working taxpayers. If parents have separated then they should look after their children between them. They should not be allowed to have children as an excuse for receiving money from the millions of taxpayers.

Many workless and idle men live with many women today. They have many children. The object is to receive large amounts of tax money. They do not have to work. They produce brainwashed children who

pick up the knowledge that you can live without working. You can smoke, drink alcohol and enjoy man-made entertainment on the taxpayers' money. There are too many humans on this planet and they are increasing in numbers out of control. They steal the land and destroy the other life forms. Our country used to be forests; it is now fields for humans using other life's space. They have the same rights to survive on this rightfully shared planet.

We are manipulating and destroying ourselves and maybe the planet world.

TOM WILLIAMS
Sutton Hill

It is time to kill off all of these organisations to save money

WE are always being told that the government needs to save money in order to preserve services so I suggest they take up my idea and disband some, if not all, of the stupid, inefficient and expensive agencies that they control.

We have the Ombudsman run mainly by ex-senior executives of local authorities usually after they have taken a large golden handshake to retire early with a pension. Someone let me know when they hear next of any member of the public gaining success where these people are concerned.

The Ombudsman is only interested in procedures and believe me councillors and officers are very good at procedures. Truth and justice have nothing to do with procedures. We also have the Freedom of Information Commission and I am not very impressed with my dealings with them so far.

Finally I come to the Child Support Agency whose record is extremely poor in my opinion.

We hear that up to £6 million is owed by absent fathers to keep their offspring in Shropshire alone.

Some debts going back over 20 years so the chances of recovering that money are now very slim.

The system is changing and single mothers will now have to pay the CSA to recover any contributions they achieve and somehow I don't think that that is going to happen.

Have a guess who will continue to be paying for these children where the mothers are unemployed and without income? I will give you a clue! It won't be the fathers!

Quangos and agencies should be shut down, as promised by Cameron, and there would be a lot more money for genuine need. The three I have mentioned are just the tip of the iceberg. The sums of money involved are astronomical, but getting rid of them would upset the government's buddies!

ADRIAN WILLIAMS
Bratton

Elitism has ruled for far too long

A NEW United States. So now we see the power of the people against the elitism, who have ruled for decades. I never thought it would happen but I can now see why it has.

Perhaps this country of ours will take note of how the elitism has controlled here for decades as well.

The most recent examples are judges with not an inch of responsibility to the majority vote and individuals whom think they are above the electorate politicians, Clegg and Blair, to name only two of the elitists whom think they know best, or should I say treat the people as idiots.

So maybe after American the people of Great Britain will stand up and take on this corrupt attitude against the will of the people. As history tells us look after your subjects or the word responsible revolution comes to mind.

L THOMAS
Wellington

Road opens – but with no invite for mayor



Oswestry bypass opened 30 years ago, on December 22, 1986, and although Oswestry's Town Mayor, Councillor Colin Bain, was naturally pleased, he was upset that he had not had an invitation to the opening ceremony. The sign behind him says the road was opening in the summer of 1987, but in the event it was completed six months early.

Politicians do need to remember they are serving public

IT would seem that five minutes after a general election voters become invisible until the next one.

Incoming politicians blame the previous lot for the "crisis" that prevents the incomers from keeping their promises to the general public (so called centre ground) and they set out to please their paymasters – be they global capitalists or trade unionists.

When politics became a career option not a calling, MPs and county councillors will do and say anything to stay in power.

Mismanagement of finances didn't seem to phase the chancellors.

Remember Labour's "there's no money left", Gordon Brown selling our gold reserves and the Tories running up a bigger deficit than the last lot.

I love to see headless chicken politicians running in circles as they realise they might have to do something we actually voted for. Watch them wriggle to stay in/on their EU gravy train.

Roll on the next election.

D G SMITH
Oswestry

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POST

Readers' Letters,
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chronicle.co.uk

Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

Lights could be going out

I BELIEVE that the so called 'green energy drive' resulted not from any desire to save the planet, or stop climate change, but was simply invented to smash the coal unions, a move inspired by Maggie Thatcher.

As a result, we face a huge shortfall in electricity supplies, which will mean the lights going off all over the UK very soon.

The sums don't add up, and there are no miracle sources of power available to us in the foreseeable future.

W F KERSWELL
Picklescott

Remoaners need to accept result of Brexit referendum

SO we still have some 'Remoaners' that still cannot accept that 17 million voted out of the EU and won, and now trying some sneaky ploy to derail it.

Yes, perhaps Theresa May should not have delayed invoking Article 50, it should have been done on her first day in office.

But these money men in Parliament, that obviously want us in so they can get even richer, have no sympathy for the poor and low-waged, most who voted to leave. They were voted in to represent the people – not themselves. Well let's name them, and let's get them voted out of their cushy positions, or what's the point of democracy?

What do you think these pompous elected 'Remoaners' would say if once they got elected, people that didn't vote for them could go to court, get a ballot and have a second vote? They'd laugh at you.

Let's not forget Parliament voted 544 to 53 to give the people a vote in the referendum on whether they want in or out of Europe – Out won, end of.

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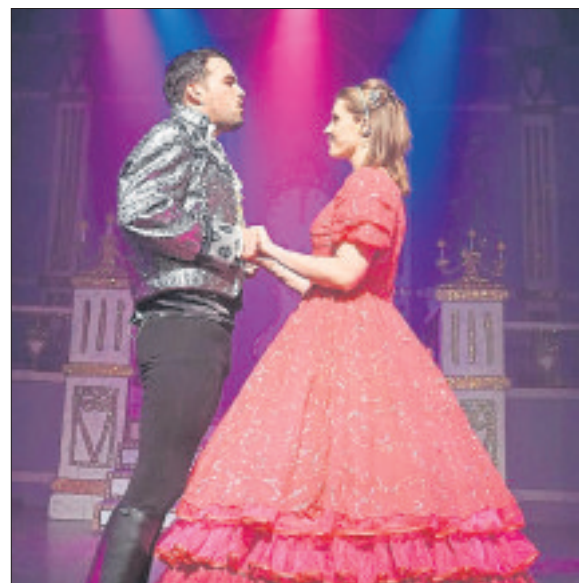
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Dandini is played by Michael Jenkins and Prince Charming is played by The Only Way Is Essex's Ricky Rayment



Ricky Rayment and Charlotte Knowles perform together

Panto fun for all

MORE than 3,000 panto-goers have already enjoyed one of the region's best-loved pantomimes, despite the curtain going up a little over a week ago.

Cinderella at The Stiwt Theatre in Rhosllanerchrugog, just over the Shropshire/Wales border, only opened last week but has already proved a success among those young and old.

The pantomime stars two Shropshire performers. Charlotte Knowles, from Oswestry, is playing the leading role of Cinderella, and Michael Jenkins, from Gobowen, is appearing

as Prince Charming's sidekick Dandini, as well as directing the panto.

Michael said he's thrilled with how the production has been received so far.

He said: "The run has started with a bang, we have performed to over 3,000 school children this week alone, not including the evening and weekend performances to the general public."

"I am absolutely thrilled with the feedback we've been receiving, we've been inundated on social media with great comments and the cast has also received good old fashioned letters of thanks."

"Pantomime is clearly a family orientated style of performance, and this production Cin-

derella quite frankly has something for everybody."

The Only Way Is Essex's Ricky Rayment has also made his panto debut in this production.

Praising his celebrity co-star's performances, Michael said: "Ricky has been great to work with, it's quite remarkable that he's never been on stage before. He's taken to it like a duck to water, everything from his singing to dancing has been brilliant."

"I can honestly say that I think Ricky has a career in the live performance field." Cinderella runs until December 31 at The Stiwt Theatre, with evening and matinee performances. Tickets are available from www.stiwt.com or from the box office on (01978) 841300.



There is plenty of colour and romance in the Cinderella pantomime at The Stiwt Theatre in Rhosllanerchrugog near Oswestry

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Members of 1165 Oswestry Squadron ATC air cadets enjoyed the festive fun on the Cambrian Heritage Railway



It's all aboard as Santa sets off on a day of present-giving

Super Santa service!

ALL aboard! Hundreds of youngsters have been taking rides on a Santa Special train to visit the man in red with their Christmas wish list this year.

Wrapped gifts were presented to every child by Father Christmas during the special trips, while parents tucked into mulled wine when the steam locomotive pulled in for a stop at Oswestry railway station.

The Santa Special train services have been organised by members of Cambrian Heritage Railway in Oswestry. The services in Oswestry

have been running from the Victorian station in Oswald Road, past Coney Green to the gasworks bridge.

The train operated on Saturday for the final time before Christmas Day.

Tickets cost £8 each and people were advised to book online in advance to be guaranteed a seat. A similar service was also held at the rail group's other base at Llyncllys near Oswestry. The project was among the visitor attraction's key fundraising events for the year.

Jenny Pickstock, Cambrian Heritage Railway's company secretary, said the event has been "brilliant" and had been looking a lot busier than last year.

She added: "We have been running these

Santa specials for many years now. A big thank you to all our passengers.

"We've had wonderful comments and feedback."

"It's been lovely to hear of how the little children have loved visiting the grotto and the whole experience."

Money raised from the Santa services go towards the group's ambitious plans for the railway. By 2018 the group wants to re-open the line as far as Weston Wharf on the edge of Oswestry to connect visitors to the Stonehouse Brewery and other businesses. Long term, enthusiasts want to open the line to Llanymynech to the south and the main line station at Gobowen to the north.



The Davidson family were among many who had the chance to meet Santa and receive a gift during the Santa Special train services. Photo: Jamie Ricketts.

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Fitness centre in fundraising drive

STAFF and members of a new fitness centre have raised £3,455 for a local cancer fund through a charity event.

Ceri Roberts, owner of Unique Fitness in Brook Street, Welshpool, along with staff and members of the centre undertook three hours of back-to-back activities including spinning, Combat MX and Triple Threat during a fundraising morning.

Sponsorship helped raise the cash, with match funding of £1,000 from Barclays Bank, which has now been donated to the Lingen Davies Cancer Fund and was presented to representatives of the charity to help their work.

Ceri said: "We had a great day undertaking a range of activities and we have to thank everyone who sponsored us. We were really pleased with how much money we raised for such a worthwhile charity."

Shop opens its doors up again

A CONVENIENCE store has reopened after it was forced to close after a customer spotted a rat.

1st Stop on Broad Street, Welshpool, had been issued with a hygiene emergency prohibition notice, ordering the food department of the store to be closed.

The Post Office and newspaper and magazine sales department remained open.

A spokesman for 1st Stop said: "We are pleased to be back to normal and grateful to our regular customers for their understanding and patience during this difficult time."

He added: "We can assure everyone that we have given every assistance to council officers to eliminate the problems."

New partnership lays down logo challenge

Report by Naomi Penrose

SECONDARY school pupils are being challenged to design a logo for a new partnership which aims to develop career guidance for young people.

The best design will earn the successful young person the latest iPad. The Positive Pathways Powys group brings together Powys County Council, secondary schools in the county, the NPTC Group of Colleges, Powys Association of Voluntary Organisations (PAVO), Careers Wales and Cambrian Training, who are working together to make it easier for young people to choose what to do after they leave high school.

Cllr Arwel Jones, cabinet member for education, said: "Positive Pathways Powys is all about helping our young people choose the right direction for them after high school. It might be 6th form which is best for them, it might be an apprenticeship or further education or it might be another form of work or volunteering. There are many options available to young people and it can be a bit bewildering."

"To help us with this work are looking to our talented pupils to design us a logo which will represent the work of the partnership."

Entry forms for the competition are available from Powys secondary schools or by emailing Jayne.bevan@powys.gov.uk.

The closing date for the competition will be January 31 and the competition is open to all secondary school pupils in Powys. The winner will be awarded their prize at the partnership's first careers event which is to be held in Llanellwedd in March.

Historic castle inspires new book



Lucy Sadler's new book has been inspired by Powis Castle

A MOTHER who was taken on tours around Powis Castle has written a book based on its grandeur for parents to read to children at bedtime.

Lucy Sadler, 34, whose parents Les and Heather Davies live in Welshpool, said: "My uncle David, who was a volunteer at the castle for many years, used to take me on tours around the castle and gardens as a little girl and I have lovely memories of those times. I've loved reading books to my daughter, even when she was a few days old and feel it's really important for children. As a mother myself now, with a two-year-old daughter, Willow, I wanted to write and illustrate a story I could read to her and that other families could enjoy too."

Lucy started writing *Twilight Cat & The Red Castle* a year ago, about a cat, who lives in the woods with a witch in Welshpool. Lucy said she wanted to focus on Welshpool because it was the place where she grew up and she knows it better than anywhere. "I worked at the castle during my gap year in the offices, front-of-house and at the restaurant, so I felt I knew it well enough to write about it in detail," she said.

Independent wins seat at County Hall

AN independent candidate secured almost half the vote in a by-election to become the newest Powys County Councillor.

Graham Breeze, who already represents the Llanerchydol Ward on Welshpool Town Council, won the vacant Welshpool seat caused by the death of Councillor Ann Holloway.

He polled 323 votes with Liberal Democrat candidate Richard Church taking 212 and Conservative Ruth Canning picking up 126 votes in a 38 per cent turnout.

Councillor Breeze said he was delighted to have won the seat, after being encouraged by the late Councillor Holloway.

"Councillor Holloway encouraged me to stand for Welshpool Town Council and with her health failing persuaded me to stand for her seat on Powys County Council," said Councillor Breeze.

Meanwhile Labour candidate Nicola Morris won the seat on Welshpool Town Council in the by-election caused by the death of Councillor Holloway.

She stood for the vacant seat on the Castle Ward.

Music event is set to take place

AN evening of vintage music from 1950s through to the 1970s featuring star entertainer and recording star Terry Webster will be held in the Church House in Welshpool on February 18.

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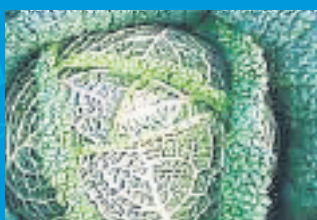
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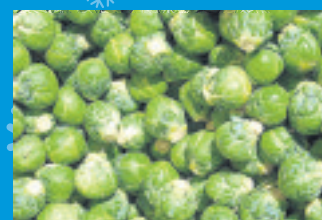
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Charity shop will support rural groups

THERE'S a new name in Oswestry town centre after a Shropshire-based charity opened its first ever set of shops.

The Rural Charity is a new arm of the Shropshire and West Midlands Agricultural Society, and has opened furniture and household shops in Oswestry, Wem and Shrewsbury.

The shops were formerly operated by Relate and closed when the Shropshire branch of the charity ran into difficulty in October.

But they are now open again under the new banner of The Rural Charity, selling second-hand furniture and other items, with all profits going to help farming and the rural community of Shropshire.

Society director Ian Bebbington said they had seen a lot of customers already.

"We have had a fantastic start," he said. "The shops were already well-established and we have kept the majority of staff and volunteers to help with the continuity. The society has never done anything like this before so it has been a steep learning curve for us, but it's going really well so far. The aim of the shops is to provide extra income so we can do more work to support the rural community in Shropshire – which is exactly what the society was established to do in 1875.

"We want to be able to make donations to people who need retraining or financial support, as well as being able to help the society's supported schemes such as the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution and the National Young Farmer's organisation." The society is best known for managing the Greenhouse West Mid Showground and organising the Shropshire County Show – formerly the West Mid Show. The Rural Charity shop in Oswestry is on Albion Hill.

More refugees given a home

MORE Syrian refugee families have been rehomed in Shropshire.

A further two families have arrived in the county, bringing the total number of families taken in by Shropshire Council to 13.

Council bosses believe the number of refugees who will be settled in the county could rise significantly with the closure of the Jungle camp at Calais.

Mal Price, Shropshire Council's cabinet member for planning, housing, regulatory services and environment, said he was pleased the authority had been able to help more people in need.

He said: "We're really pleased to welcome our newest families to Shropshire."

"Our working group along with Refugee Action has worked incredibly hard over the past several months to ensure everything is in place to help and support the families to quickly settle into Shropshire life. There has been a great deal of logistical details to sort out prior to the refugees' arrival, and we are only taking those we know we can safely and readily accommodate."

"The support from local people has been overwhelming and I would like to thank all those who continue to support these families, all of whom have had to flee from their homes and families because of this terrible conflict."

Councillor quits for life abroad

A POWYS County Council cabinet member is stepping down from her role for family reasons.

Powys Councillor Avril York, cabinet member for regeneration and planning, who has been in post since January last year, is leaving Powys to join her husband who has accepted a job in Hong Kong.

Her replacement will be Councillor Tony Thomas.

Leader of Powys County Council Barry Thomas said: "I thank Councillor York for her hard work and commitment over the past 12 months as portfolio holder for regeneration and planning services."

Councillor York said: "I have enjoyed my time on the cabinet despite local government enduring very uncertain times and feel proud of the work carried out by officers on our behalf over the past two years."

"I am particularly pleased that we have reshaped our engagement with the private sector and have seen great improvements in our planning service."

Hospital working to ensure patients sleep tight



Royal Shrewsbury Hospital staff Patreen Alexa Gabales and Viola Jones discuss the sleep initiative with Julia Greig, a patient from Llynclys, near Oswestry

OSWESTRY Orthopaedic Hospital is involved in a project to ensure patients get a good night's sleep.

The hospital has teamed up with The Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust and the Shropshire Community Health NHS

Trust to draw up a 'Quiet Night – Sleep Tight' charter which lists nine pledges.

Sleep is essential for a patient's quick recovery following treatment or surgery. But the results of the 2015 Adult Inpatient Survey showed that 20 per cent of patients nationally

said they are bothered by noise at night which keeps them awake.

Beverley Tabernacle, director of nursing at the orthopaedic hospital, said: "We know that sleep is vital to a patient's recovery, and that their experience of being in hospital is affected

by noise disturbance. That is why we were delighted to support the creation of the Quiet Night – Sleep Tight Charter."

"The pledges it contains are all sensible measures which we should be following to help our patients sleep."



Oswestry Orthopaedic Hospital's Jo-Anne Richards and Alison Harper discuss the importance of sleep with patient Peter Vollmer

Teamwork is key to couple's job sharing arrangement



Husband and wife team Richard and Sarah Burton chat about sermons



The couple are happy to share out the responsibilities of the work in the church

Report by Laura Cole

WHEN Richard Burton was made redundant from his post within the Church of England it was his wife, Sarah, who found the perfect solution for the family – a unique job share.

The couple are now splitting responsibilities as rector of St John the Baptist Church.

After moving to the area five years ago Sarah became rector of Whittington and West Felton, whilst Richard was employed as senior parish development officer for the Chester Diocese for 10 years.

The decision to share Sarah's role as vicar came when Richard was made redundant.

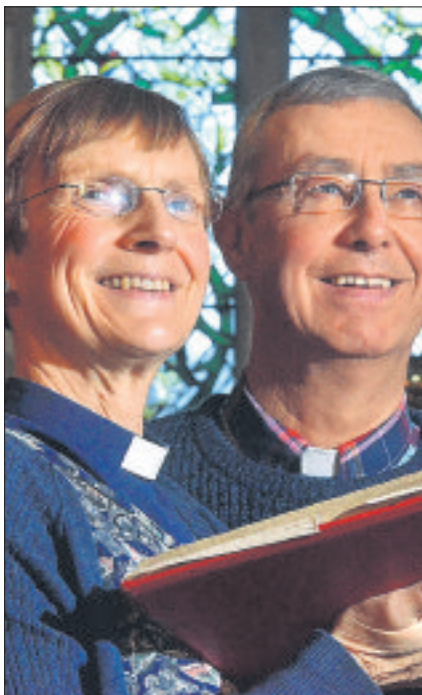
"We had always wanted to do it at some point but we were sort of pushed into it, we are very pleased it happened sooner rather than later," said Richard.

"It was a silver lining, and a life change. Whilst before we were always time poor and money rich, now it's the other way round, but we are lucky enough to be financially secure," said Sarah.

Sarah's role has remained as rector but Richard is now an associate minister. They carry out work that needs to be done across the parishes and share the load. This includes home visits, funerals, school assemblies and general pastoral support.

She said: "We act as a source of comfort to people in their homes, we also attend schools and offer themed collective worship where children are given time to reflect on issues such as peace, friendship and bullying."

They say their shared role can be seen as a reflection of the changing part the church plays in the community.



Working together – Sarah and Richard Burton



Sarah and Richard Burton are sharing responsibilities. Photos: Steve Leath.

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School may have to cut back on staff

A VILLAGE primary school may have to reduce its teaching staff to balance its books.

Llanrhaeadr ym Mochnant is one of the schools that has been told by Powys County Council that it must achieve a balanced budget over the next three years.

But supporters of the popular school say cuts should not be at the expense of educational standards and the school's dual stream structure.

Montgomeryshire Welsh Assembly Member, Russell George, took the school's plight to the Welsh parliament, questioning minister Alun Davies AM, on the importance of retaining bilingual education in Powys.

Mr George said: "In spite of efforts from the headteacher and governors of Llanrhaeadr ym Mochnant Primary School, it appears that it will have to make reductions in staffing from a five to a four teacher school in order to meet the challenge which has been set by Powys County Council of balancing its budget within three years.

"In doing that, it would lead to the combination of English and Welsh infant streams in the afternoons, compromising, of course, the school's bilingual status as a school."

He said that all small, rural, dual-stream schools face extra costs.

Powys County Council says that there are 40 schools currently in deficit and a projected deficit greater than the council's general reserve. At a recent cabinet meeting it was agreed that the budget plan for Llanrhaeadr remains unlicensed but that the school is required to continue to work with the local authority to further improve the position.

Grant joy for dome project

A SCHOOL which is building an eco-dome in its grounds has won an £8,000 grant from a supermarket plastic bag scheme.

The Marches School in Oswestry has been giving the money as part of the Tesco Bags of Help initiative for the dome which will be built next year.

It was awarded from the funds raised by the 5p bag charge after the public voted for the school in the Whitchurch and Ellesmere stores.

The project aims to bring the outside inside and create an exciting classroom space and conservation area on the grounds of The Marches.

Joanne White, business and community development manager, thanked everyone for their support.

She said: "Geodesic domes are inspiring and innovative spaces within which to learn.

"Having such a dome on-site will provide students with an environment in which every individual can become involved in active learning.

"Thank you to everyone who voted and especially to Tesco which has awarded us the grant. We hope that this conservation project will educate and inspire many students across all years to become aware of the importance of conservation and the environment."

Friends hand over £13,000

THE fundraising efforts of Friends of Llanfair Caeirin Primary School have resulted in £13,000 being donated to the school this year.

The money has been raised following a series of successful fundraising events, led by a dedicated committee supported by the wider community.

The funding has enabled the school to purchase four state-of-the-art interactive boards along with other playground and classroom materials.

Ruth Bates, chair of the Friends of the School said: "Fundraising for the school is an all-year-round job. We thank everyone for supporting these events.

"It just shows that together we can raise a substantial amount of money, which in turn is used to purchase equipment that helps improve the educational experience for all pupils."

She added: "At a time of diminishing public funds, the support of parents and the wider community has never been so important."

Gemma and her team support woolly good idea



Gemma Manning-Bentley has backed the big knit project for several years

TINY little hats are set to raise hundreds of pounds for Age UK.

Gemma Manning-Bentley and her friends and customers in Oswestry have knitted 3,000 miniature woolly hats for the charity's Big Knit Appeal.

Age UK has once again teamed up with drinks company, Innocent, which put the hats on their smoothie bottles as part of a campaign to keep vulnerable, older people warm in the winter. Gemma, who runs Gemmipop Designs, dropped the hats off at the Shropshire Telford



Heather Osborne and Ruth Brown from Age UK with Gemma Manning-Bentley

and Wrekin Age UK office in Shrewsbury. Supporters and customers of Gemmipop Designs have knitted or crocheted more than 17,000 of the little hats over the last six years to support the Big Knit.

"For every be-hatted bottle sold, 25p will

go straight to Age UK Shropshire," she said. "This will allow the charity to provide Surviving Winter grants to local older people who can't afford to keep warm during the winter."

Gemma organises a knit-a-long session with tea and cake every year.

Hospital staff are real stars as top standards are met



Members of the Powys Ward team celebrate at Oswestry Orthopaedic Hospital



Staff on Ludlow Ward have been congratulated for achieving high standards

Report by Sue Austin

TWO wards at Oswestry Orthopaedic Hospital have been given the highest ranking following a recent assessment.

Both Powys, the general surgical ward, and Ludlow, the private patients' ward, had top marks in the STAR - Sustaining Quality Through Assessment and Review - process.

Staff in the wards completed rigorous assessments which included testing the quality of patient care, but also management structures and innovation.

Powys ward manager Deb Povall said: "My team are dedicated to ensuring that every single patient that comes through the doors has the best possible care. Quite simply they care from beginning to end."

Ludlow ward manager Helen Cooper said: "The whole focus is around the patient and their needs while staying on the ward. Getting the rating has been hard work but so rewarding. My team are amazing and I'm so proud of them for what they have achieved."

Meanwhile, an Autumn Ball to raise money for the hospital has surpassed its target by over £1,000. Volunteers and patients gathered in Ludlow for a night of festivities in aid of the hospital's pain management team. Employees from Barclays Bank also helped to raise money on the night and contributed £2,000, resulting in a total of £5,200. Both organisers, Caroline and Marie Dahn from Ludlow, came into the hospital to donate the cheque.

Caroline receives treatment from the pain management team led by consultant, Dr Lourdes Gaspar. Medical secretary Deborah Palmer, chief executive Mark Brandreth, and nurse specialist Jan Gilchrist also met the fundraisers.



Deborah Palmer, Mark Brandreth, fundraiser Caroline Dahn, Dr Lourdes Gaspar, Jan Gilchrist and fundraiser Marie Dahn



The Bean Man was played by Matthew Walter



Luke Whitmore performs on stage during the pantomime at the Derwen College



The role of Jack was played by Ophir Yaron



The Derwen College's pantomime this year was Jack and The Beanstalk. Photos: Steve Leath.

Students show off panto talents

STAFF and students at a specialist college near Oswestry showed off their performing talents when they took part in a pantomime.

The panto was staged by Derwen College at Gobowen which educates and cares for people with learning and physical disabilities.

The creative studies and personal development students performed their pantomime, Jack and the Beanstalk.

The show was the culmination of three months of work by the student and the staff.

The pantomime is not the only time in the year when the students show off their performing prowess.

The students also put on a summer show involving all aspects of a theatre performance including props, dance routines and costumes.

And the college students stole the show when they performed at this year's Oswestry Christmas Lights switch-on event.

The students took to the stage at the Bailey Head in the town and gave a memorable performance.

Report by Sue Austin

Staff and students are also celebrating after featuring in the national Ofsted Annual Report as an example of some of the very best educational provision in the UK.

The report, produced by her Majesty's Chief Inspector Sir Michael Wilshaw, summarises the quality of education across the country for the academic year 2015-16. The Derwen is featured as an outstanding specialist college.

Meryl Green, director of learning and quality, said the college was included in the report as a best practice example. She said: "The high profile report praises college governors, leaders and managers for setting high expectations for each student. It goes on to say how much students enjoy their time at Derwen and how well they develop their personal and vocational skills. When inspected the college in March this year Ofsted inspectors were particularly impressed by the partnership working we have established with local and national employers to provide students with relevant work experience opportunities and give them the very best chance of securing employment in the future."



Staff members Andrew Harris, Gordon Evans and Jack Harris get in on the act



Audience members clearly enjoyed the show



Jacob Howell was Jack's mum, Corey Edwards was the cow and Ophir Yaron played Jack



Rehearsals were held to ensure everyone knew their words for the panto



There was plenty of fun at the panto



There were a few colourful characters

Hospice panto fun

Report by Naomi Penrose

PLENTY of fun was had as children were given a chance to take to the stage and be the stars in their very own pantomime...oh yes they did!

Young people and staff at Hope House Children's Hospice in Morda, near Oswestry, performed the pantomime Peter Pan to get into the Christmas spirit.

Lynsey Kilvert, fundraiser for Hope House Children's Hospice, said the pantomime was one of the highlights of the year for everyone at the hospice.

She said staff loved getting into the festive spirit by taking part in the production.

She said: "The pantomime really is a wonderful way for everyone here to have a bit of fun but also get us in the mood for Christmas."

"Everyone here gets involved - even our chief executive Andy Goldsmith."

"He's playing Captain Hook this year."

"It's all good fun and really brings a smile to everyone's faces."

The special one-off performance allows the staff and children at the hospice to dress up and perform in front of an audience.

Every year the hospice invites many of its supporters along to watch the performance and get involved.

The young people at Hope House were also treated to a visit by the stars of the pantomime Cinderella, taking place at The Stiwt Theatre, just outside of Wrexham

The Only Way is Essex's Ricky Rayment, who is playing Prince Charming, and Charlotte Knowles, who plays Cinderella, spent the morning chatting and playing with the youngsters.



The cast of this year's Hope House Children's Hospice pantomime line up for a group shot



Panto stars Ricky Rayment and Charlotte Knowles popped in to say hello to the hospice children



Everyone was looking forward to the big production



Staff rehearsed well to ensure they were ready



Staff and children rehearse for the panto at Hope House Children's Hospice

PROPERTY

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19
Oswestry & Border Chronicle
Thursday, December 22, 2016

Traditional home with improved accommodation

A large village house with new windows, 9 Oaklands Drive, Whittington is positioned on a generous attractive plot with a double driveway and a garage.

It is for sale through JJ Dell & Co at £229,950. With double glazing and gas central heating it has a porch, an entrance hall, cloakroom/WC, two reception rooms, a kitchen, utility, four bedrooms, a bathroom and en-suite and a good sized garden.

The property is situated in a quiet road within the village with excellent local facilities including a post office, a village shop, a hairdressers, an ancient moated castle, church and two pubs. The village is convenient for travelling to Oswestry with a regular local bus service, Shrewsbury, Wrexham and Chester. There is also a main line railway station at Gobowen three miles away.

The property has improved accommodation with new pvc windows and external decoration. It also has gas fired central heating and double glazing. In more detail the entrance hall has a tiled floor and the cloakroom/WC includes a heated towel rail.

With a modern brick fireplace housing a gas coal-effect fire, the sitting room has a fitted carpet and double doors opening to the dining room. The kitchen has modern fitted units comprising ample fitted wall and base cupboards with worktops an extractor canopy, plumbing for a dishwasher, tiled flooring and a view down the garden. The utility room has a sink, wall and base cupboards with worktops, plumbing for a washing machine, space for a dryer, tiled flooring and a door to outside.

Off the first floor, bedroom one has a large wardrobe with mirrored sliding doors and an en-suite shower room and is carpeted. The remaining three bedrooms are carpeted and the bathroom has a modern white suite, contemporary wall and floor tiles and a heated towel rail.

Outside, the property is set back from the road. The driveway has ample car parking space and access to the garage which has an integral door to the utility.

The neat and well maintained rear lawned garden has a good size patio area, a shed, summerhouse and decking.

KEY FEATURES

Four bedrooms

Bathroom & en-suite

Double driveway & garage

Village position

Quiet road

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£775,000

House in a tranquil hill location with around 11 acres

A charming house in a tranquil location set on Bausley Hill with around 11 acres of woodland and paddocks, Bausley Hill Farm at Crew Green has outstanding views across Shropshire.

It is for sale through Balfours at £775,000.

It has a dining hall, sitting room, study, kitchen, garden room, a ground floor bedroom with an en-suite shower room, four further bedrooms, a large bathroom, large shower room, a double garage, handling barn, gardens, mature and established woodland and paddocks.

Bausley Hill Farm is situated at the eastern end of the beautiful Briedden Hills, on the Shropshire/Powys border. The property reaches around the hill with an iron fort on the top and woodland extending down to beautiful natural meadowland below.



The surrounding area is well placed for superb off road riding and walking. Bausley Hill Farm is unique with a charming house nestled into the hilltop.

The farm dates back to the 17th century with an immense oak frame and exposed studwork, although the house was completely renovated in 1993 and recently extended to provide a ground floor bedroom with an en-suite bathroom.

The front door opens to a dining hall off which is the sitting room featuring an inglenook fireplace. Off the dining hall is a large study and a farmhouse style fitted kitchen with a Stanley range.

To the rear of the house is a garden room currently used as a dining area looking over the patio and garden. Upstairs there are four bedrooms, three of which have fitted wardrobes, a bathroom and shower room.

Outside, there is double garage with a loft above, garden, handling barn, 3.5 acres of paddocks and 5.5 acres of mature and established woodland.

There is a further 45 acres of wood and woodland grazing available separately.

Close to the village of Crew Green, Bausley Hill Farm is easily accessible to Welshpool, Oswestry and Shrewsbury and is within commuting distance of of Telford and West Midlands centres.

Contact Balfours on 01743 353511 for more information.

Superb property includes two separate homes and lawned gardens

TREFLACH
£425,000 >>>

This superb detached residence in Oak Lane, Treflach is a high spec self build consisting of a spacious three double bed roomed home plus a detached triple garage with a self-contained apartment.

It is for sale through Town & Country at £425,000. The property sits in landscaped grounds with lawned gardens and extensive parking. Situated in a tucked away location in the pretty village of Treflach, all amenities are close by with Oswestry town a five minute drive away. The property offers great scope for two families with adaptable accommodation. The property has been built to a very high standard by the present owners and includes superb insulation, high specification fixtures and fittings along with Cat 5 wiring installed. All rooms are decorated immaculately with carpeting and flooring being in 'as new' condition.

A gravelled driveway leads to the property and is accessed via two farm style timber gates. The driveway provides parking for numerous vehicles leading to the triple garage. The rear garden includes a patio and lawn.

Contact Town & Country on 01691 679631.



Super Georgian country house has lawns and tennis court

OSWESTRY
£1,250,000 <<<

A fully restored Georgian country house adjoining parkland and open countryside, Pen-y-Llan Hall on the edge of Oswestry is for sale through Bowen Son & Watson at £1,250,000.

It has a vestibule, entrance hall, inner hall, drawing room, study, morning room, dining room, conservatory, cloakroom/WC, sitting room, playroom, kitchen, utility room, pantry and cellars.

It also has a master bedroom with dressing room and en-suite bathroom, four further bedrooms all en-suite, bedroom six, dressing room, two attic rooms, a bathroom, detached former annexe with planning permission for a workshop, stores, kitchen, cloakroom/WC, garaging and domestic buildings.

There are also lawned gardens and a tennis court and woodland of around 2.8 acres.

Contact Bowen Son & Watson on 01691 652367.



Detached home on a substantial plot comes with good gardens

OSWESTRY
£176,500

<<<

A charming detached three-bedroomed property on a substantial plot, 74 Llys Road, Oswestry is well presented throughout and has parking for numerous vehicles.

With generous lawned gardens and a wood burning stove in the lounge, it is for sale through Morris Marshall & Poole at £176,500. With gas central heating and double glazing, its accommodation briefly comprises an entrance hallway, a lounge with the wood-burning stove, a dining room, a kitchen, three bedrooms and a bathroom.

The private gardens include a generous lawned area with hedging and fencing for privacy with a paved patio area and shrubbed borders.

The attached single garage has an up and over door, an integral door to the kitchen and an external door to the rear.

Contact Morris Marshall & Poole on 01691 679595.



Property has seven bedrooms and land

DUDLESTON
£750,000

New Hall at Dudleston between Oswestry and Ellesmere is a substantial Grade II listed seven double-bedroomed family home with stables and 8.5 acres.

It is for sale through Balfours at £750,000. It is a substantial period property dating back to the 15th century. The accommodation is arranged over two floors and offers modern comfort whilst retaining original features such as large sash windows, oak floorboards, an inglenook fireplace, a twisted balustrade oak staircase originating from around 1750 and generously sized rooms with high ceilings.

The property is approached via a drive and is set in a rural area with good access. Nearby facilities at St Martins include a post office, supermarket and a public house.

Contact Balfours on 01743 353511.



CHARTERED SURVEYORS



Looking forward to a successful



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J.J. Dells are Offering
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New system of collections a big success

COUNCIL bosses say they are delighted with the response to new recycling collections across parts of Shropshire.

After several years of not being able to collect cardboard Shropshire Council relaunched its waste collection service, run by Veolia, at the start of October.

Earlier this year changes were also made that allow residents in Shrewsbury to add food waste to their garden waste bins.

In the first month of the new system, an extra 99 tonnes of recycling was collected in Shrewsbury. The scheme has recently been rolled out in South Shropshire and will be introduced in Oswestry and Bridgnorth in the new year.

Paul Beard, waste contracts manager at Shropshire Council, said he was pleased with the public response.

He said: "The response from the public has been excellent.

"It has been something we have talked about for a while and the response is as we expected.

"Shrewsbury and North Shropshire are on the go and there is no reason to believe South Shropshire won't be as successful.

"Anecdotal evidence from our crews is that collection rounds are getting that bit longer because of the take-up.

"What we have had as a result is a 20 per cent increase in all dry recycling collections.

"We think people have been reminded about the recycling message in general. Simplifying it so all metals can go in one box has helped."

Mr Beard said that although he expects the amount of extra recycling collected to drop off, he believes the council will continue to collect more recycling from households due to the simple method.

Search work cost revealed

MORE than £7 million has been spent in almost two years by West Mercia Police searching for people who have gone missing in Shropshire.

Around 3,000 people have gone missing in that time – more than 1,000 of them children in care.

Many children under the supervision of social services have been reported missing multiple times.

One teenager is reported to have been sought by police on 46 separate occasions within the two years.

The issue places a strain on West Mercia Police resources, diverting officers away from fighting crime.

Figures reveal that, since April of this year, police have recorded and investigated 1,658 reports of missing people in Shropshire. Of these reports, 1,042 are of children under 18 and 585 involved children in care. The total cost to the force in that time is in the region of £4 million.

Between April 2015 and March 2016 police recorded and investigated 1,485 reports of missing children and adults in Shropshire. Of these 847 involved children under 18 years and 512 reports involved children in care. The cost of these investigations ran to £3.58 million.

The cost of a medium term, medium risk police missing person investigation is calculated at an average of £2,415.

Council ready for the winter

SHROPSHIRE Council says it is "well prepared" to keep the county's roads open throughout the winter, but has warned that budget cuts will put the service under pressure in coming years.

Currently around £2 million is set aside for the authority's "winter maintenance" efforts, although a report from Steve Brown, the council's highways, transport & environment commissioning manager, says some non-essential requests could be affected by cuts in the future. Those services include requests for extra grit boxes, one-off gritting on roads outside the "defined network" and salting for some footpaths and car parks.

According to a report prepared for the council's environment and services scrutiny committee, staff will need to make a more "robust response" to requests outside the authority's statutory responsibility.

Current council policy sees A and B roads gritted, along with certain important local distributor roads.

Institute in village celebrates special occasion



Pant Women's Institute members celebrating 85 years of the group

IT was a special evening for member of Pant Women's Institute at a recent meeting.

First item on the evening's agenda was the annual general meeting.

Sandra Rowlands, president, welcomed everyone and especially Heather Dulson,

vice-chairman of Shropshire Federation. The reports were submitted and adopted.

Mrs Rowlands agreed to remain as president for the forthcoming year, and also there were no changes to the committee.

There then followed a brief ordinary meet-

ing. The speaker for the evening was John Lightfoot.

He who gave a talk on the barn owl, illustrated with many slides.

He was thanked by Linda Bristow.

Then there was a birthday celebration.



Pant WI members Rene Lindop and Joan Jones with the celebratory cake

Members were handed the certificate of 85 years by Mrs Dulson who then cut the birthday cake.

A choice of sparkly drinks and a piece of cake finished off a happy friendly evening for all the members who attended.

Group has plenty of ideas in mind to help those in need



Jenny Brazier puts together a mosaic at Designs in Mind in Oswestry



Jenny Gilford makes a mosaic at the Designs in Mind studios in Oswestry

Report by Laura Cole

AN Oswestry organisation which helps people with mental health problems currently has its longest referral list since it opened, bosses have revealed.

Designs in Mind is a social enterprise business with a studio of design makers supporting those in the area with conditions such as depression, schizophrenia, bi-polar, psychosis, stress and anxiety.

According to its business manager Catherine Wilks, many people in Oswestry and surrounding areas are in a mental health crisis. She said: "It's heartbreaking that we can't take on more people. More demands are being placed on us". The service operates on a referral based practice from either a GP, the mental health team or the crisis home treatment team and is based in studios in Cross Street.

Members work on private or public art commissions. There is also the studio's own brand – Jolt. The brand includes print and patterns designed for the home. Skills learnt include basket weaving, ceramics, felting and printing.

Kathryn Diggins, who also works at the project, said "People are often surprised at what we produce, our designs exceed expectations. It's a shame people have such low expectations of achievement within mental health but it's nice to receive praise. It's important that individuals do not become overshadowed by their illness and lose themselves in the process. Purpose comes from being valued elsewhere. If you work with purpose you can change people's lives." For more information on the project visit www.designsinmind.co.uk or call (01691) 655140.



Some of the artwork carried out at the studios



Artists using the facilities at the Designs in Mind studios in Oswestry

Review of the Year

A look back through the highs and lows of 2016 in your area



In a time of change, community stays the same

WELCOME to the Oswestry and Border Chronicle's review of 2016.

The last 12 months in the Oswestry and Welshpool area have once again provided a wide variety of news stories for our staff to report.

There have been many highs and quite a

few lows but the year 2016 has never been dull.

The arguments for and against Brexit have been at the forefront of the minds of many in the last 12 months and those arguments have often been reflected in the Chronicle's news and letters pages. And the ongoing Future Fit health shake-up, which will have wide repercussions for patients in

Oswestry and Welshpool, has also been a major concern for many campaigners.

Add to that other national and international events and it is no surprise if 2016 will be seen by many as a year of change and uncertainty.

But one thing that has not changed and probably never will is the incredible community spirit shown by people in Oswestry and

Welshpool. Whether it is supporting those in need, being rightly proud of local people's incredible achievements or backing charity initiatives, the people of Oswestry and Welshpool can be relied on to do their bit to make their community a better place. One of the highlights of the year for many was the incredible support this year's Oswestry Christmas Parade enjoyed. Of course the

parade was just one huge success story the Chronicle was delighted to be able to report. Our reporters and photographers have recorded a huge variety of stories and activities in Oswestry and Welshpool and the villages in between.

Please enjoy a quick look back at some of the stories we have brought to you over the last 12 months.



Rio Paralympics hopeful Mikey Hall from St Martins with his mum Inge



Twins Jo Baines and Heidi Gannon had reason to contact the Guinness Book of Records



Mike Coppock was looking for a change in the weather

A very positive start



There was Christmas cheer in Welshpool



Councillor Paul Milner was happy to see more bike racks in Oswestry



Rosie Evans and Jess Taylor with the popular tea towel

THE year got off to an upbeat start when business bosses predicted a successful year.

The then chairman of Oswestry Chamber of Commerce Jools Payne gave a positive message for the 12 months ahead for traders.

She said she hoped to see progress on plans to ask whether businesses wanted the town centre to become a Business Improvement District which would attract external funding and improve the economy.

And there was positive news in Welshpool too when a home and outdoors chain announced plans to build a new headquarters and depot after a huge rise in online sales.

Charles Stores was looking to build the headquarters and e-commerce fulfilment centre in Welshpool, safeguarding 67 jobs and providing a base for possible new jobs in the future.

January & February

Oswestry's landmarks were immortalised in cotton – and proved a popular gift over the Christmas period. Oswestry's attractions were included on a tea towel designed by a local graphic designer and printed in Welshpool.

The tea towel was on sale in Booka Bookshop in Church Street and owner Tim Morris said it had proved popular with locals and visitors since going on sale.

The design included well-known claims to fame for the town, such as it being the birthplace of war poet Wilfred Owen, as well as the home of Old Oswestry Hillfort and the Cambrian railway works.

One Oswestry businessman was hoping for a change in the weather in January – hoping it would get colder. The previous year, people couldn't get enough hats, scarves and gloves. But in January, 2016, they were lying on the shelves. It was just an occupational hazard for Mike Coppock, who runs eclectic clothing and

gift shop Rowanthorn in Oswestry. He said he had sold no more than a handful of gloves, but said he hoped the weather would turn and selling trends would change with it.

Mr Coppock said that the weather was "one of the biggest factors" in sales and people's purchasing habits at his shop in Old Chapel Court.

Mikey Hall was working hard in January to make sporting history. Mikey from St Martins near Oswestry was already an Invictus Games gold medallist. And he was training hard to book his place in the GB team for the Rio Paralympics.

The 40-year old archer had returned to live in his home county of Shropshire during his training.

There was no need to go without some festive cheer in Welshpool after a young woman decided to try to put a smile on the faces of any one not looking forward to Christmas.

Chantelle Molyneux, 25, organised a lunch at the Bron y Buckley working men's club in

Welshpool. People called into the club for soup and sandwiches and tea and biscuits, but above all for some company.

The Guinness Book of Records was having to change a record in its latest edition after it was challenged by twins from Welshpool.

Sisters Heidi Gannon and Jo Baines were both born on September 23, 1976 but ended up being born in different countries with Heidi being born at 9am at Welshpool Hospital and Jo following at 10.45am after their mother was transferred to the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital due to complications.

So it came as a shock when Heidi's 11-year-old son William was reading the Guinness Book of Records when he noticed an entry about twins born in 2012 who supposedly held the record for being the first set born in different countries.

Surprised by the entry, the sisters contacted the Guinness Book of Records to inform them of their birth in different countries.

Oswestry was becoming more cycle-friendly

after new bike racks were installed in the town centre.

The racks had been put in after calls for more secure places to leave cycles.

Oswestry's then Deputy Mayor Councillor Paul Milner said: "It's really to encourage people to bike into town rather than use their cars."

"They can then leave them in secure places which are covered by the town's CCTV."

"Also we had some racks before, but they were only in groups of up to three, which was no good if you want to cycle in with your family."

The new racks were put in outside the town's market hall on the Bailey Head as well as in the Central Car Park. There were eight sets of racks, providing space for 16 cycles to be secured.

Members of Oswestry Town Council were asked to look into providing more cycle racks around the town. The suggestion was met with approval from all members, with several giving examples of times they had met cyclists in the town who had asked for better places to leave their bikes.

Vow to beat the yobs



Gareth Sandham with war memorabilia at Powis Castle



Jayne Middleton helped youngsters complete a fundraising walk in Oswestry



Lucy Slark took part in the Oswestry Youth Music Festival



Selina Schoelles was feeling on top of the world



Staff at the New Saints FC at Park Hall near Oswestry were geared up for a fundraiser



Councillor Duncan Kerr asked for an allowances cut

YOBBIISH behaviour was causing a headache for councillors in Welshpool in March – and they vowed to stamp it out.

Poor behaviour had spiralled in recent weeks with human excrement found at the town's railway station and the discovery of a urine-filled fridge in a doorway in Berriew Street.

A mother also took to social media to reveal her baby's buggy was spat at by a man sat on a bench drinking cider with his friends.

Welshpool Town Council had been calling for an alcohol control order to restrict street drinking but had not received the necessary backing from Dyfed-Powys Police and Powys County Council.

Town Clerk Robert Robinson said: "The problem is it's just five or six people causing the hassle, we need to find out how we deal with that."

March & April

Welshpool county councillor Phil Pritchard said: "The people of Welshpool feel it's not their own town anymore. Elderly people should be able to walk the streets of Welshpool in total safety, and at the moment they are very reticent."

Councillor John Powell, Powys County Council's cabinet member for community safety, said the authority had received several requests from the town council for the alcohol control order but said it had to be backed by the police.

Temporary Inspector Andrew Griffiths confirmed the police did not back the application for an alcohol control order, insisting the previous year's alcohol related crime figures were the lowest in around 15 years.

Two shops that had stood empty in Oswestry town centre for several years were put up for let. It was hoped that the move would attract new tenants to the large former stores in

Cross Street and see a boost to the local economy. Both units were being marketed by estate agents Halls. Rebecca Welch, from Halls Commercial, said the future looked promising for both shops, revealing there had been good interest in the properties.

Youngsters put their best foot forward to help the worldwide battle to eradicate polio.

Pupils from a number of schools across the Oswestry area walked a lap of the main footpath around the town's Cae Glas Park to raise money for the campaign.

Pupils from Whittington Primary School, Our Lady and St Oswald's School and Bellan House all took part in the sponsored walk organised by the Rotary Club of Oswestry.

Jayne Middleton from the Rotary Club of Oswestry said the children all completed the walk in the winter sunshine.

Student Selina Schoelles had the world in her hand – after achieving the best geography exam mark in Britain. Not just that, but she managed to achieve 98 per cent despite the fire

alarm going off half way through the exam. The teenager, from Neen Solars, in South Shropshire boasted the highest International GCSE mark throughout the UK.

Selina, 17, a pupil at Moreton Hall School, near Oswestry, said news of her first place came out of the blue. "I couldn't believe it. I was in shock," she said.

The leader of Shropshire Council rejected a call for a 10 per cent cut in councillors' allowances. The call had come from new Oswestry South Councillor Duncan Kerr, who used his first full council meeting to question why the authority's basic council allowance of £11,500 was higher than other councils such as Telford & Wrekin, where it starts at £7,800.

However, in response to the call Councillor Malcolm Pate, leader of the council, said: "You will find that when you have been in the council for a while that it is a very onerous task."

Oswestry Youth Music Festival was hailed as another great success. Four days of competition involved more than 1,000 young singers

and musicians. Three venues staged the competition and there were classes for instruments from piano to drums, brass, woodwind and strings as well as voices. Competition ranged from solos to duets, ensembles, choirs and bands.

Visitors to Powis Castle were invited to step into the trenches and experience life in the Somme as part of its war commemorations.

The cellars at the castle had been transformed into a recreation of a Somme trench and officer's dugout as part of its exploration of the story of Percy Robert Herbert, Viscount Clive, the 4th Earl of Powis's eldest son, who fought in the war. Visitors were able to wander through passages made of sandbags, corrugated metal sheets and wooden supports, with period items scattered throughout as if the soldiers were still making use of the trenches.

Fundraisers were out in force for Sport Relief at the home of The New Saints football club. The Oswestry-based club hosted the Sainsbury's Sport Relief Mile.



Annie Kerr and Dave Andrews were celebrating a new walking challenge



It was celebration time for The New Saints after they sealed a historic victory



Alfie Bradley and Darryl Laycock with the knife angel sculpture

A time to celebrate



Gillian Sturgess enjoyed cake-making success



Martyn Edean from FrancESCO Group in Telford and Sam Richards from Toni & Guy in Oswestry try out Joe Hart's gloves



Nursing staff were hoping for award success

IT was celebration time for history-makers The New Saints after they completed a clean sweep of domestic trophies for the second time.

The New Saints enjoyed another trophy laden season by lifting the Welsh Cup with victory over Airbus UK in the final at Wrexham's Glyndwr University Stadium.

A crowd of more than 1,400 people saw the Saints land the trophy for a third successive season. Goals in each half from Ryan Brobbel and Scott Quigley sealed the Welsh Cup for the Park Hall-based side.

By lifting the Welsh Cup, the Saints also became the first Welsh Premier side to make it back-to-back trebles.

The jubilant players were delighted to cele-

May & June

brate their unique double treble in the dressing rooms after the game.

An improvement director was appointed to offer support to Oswestry Orthopaedic Hospital as it worked to improve waiting times for patients.

Phil Orwin would spend one day a week at the world renowned hospital with a brief to provide assurance on the improvement work being carried out.

Mr Orwin's appointment follows action taken by NHS Improvement earlier this year when it published the findings of an investigation into the reporting of referral to treatment times and wider issues around waiting times at the hospital.

That came after NHS regulator Monitor launched an investigation into the trust last summer amid concerns too many patients were waiting longer than the 18-week national target for treatment.

The hospital's spinal injuries team were vying for national recognition after being shortlisted for a prestigious award.

The team was named in the final three for the outstanding team award in the Rebuilding Lives Awards, organised by the Spinal Injuries Association.

Run or walk, a new challenge was launched in which people could combine visiting the countryside with raising money for charity.

The Oswestry Round Challenge was a new 33-mile walk or run event which the organisers plan to make an annual challenge. It follows a route which forms a circuit around the town of Oswestry. The challenge was a charity event for the benefit of Cancer Research UK and the Lingen Davies Cancer Fund at the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital.

It is based on the book The Oswestry Round written by local author Dave Andrews. With photographs by his wife Jane Trudgill, the book was published shortly before Christmas and had already sold more than 500 copies

and raised more than £3,000 for charity. "Jane and I were really keen to repay the wonderful staff at the Lingen Davies Centre where I was treated for prostate cancer in 2014," the author said.

Cakemaker extraordinaire Gillian Sturgess from West Felton near Oswestry enjoyed more success with her magnificent creations.

What started as a hobby 19 years ago when she made her daughter's christening cake has blossomed into a full time career for the mother of two.

Her latest design, a large mantle clock, scooped top prize at the Cake International Show held at NEC in Birmingham, beating off opposition from around the world.

A former knife gang member said he hoped Shropshire's answer to the Angel of the North – the 25-feet tall Knife Angel – will help to combat knife crime across the UK and the world over.

Darryl Laycock, a former member of a notorious Manchester drug gang, lost 30 friends

through gang violence, said he was "flabbergasted" by the impact of the giant sculpture weighing five tonnes when it towered over him at The British Ironwork Centre, near Oswestry. The statue was being created by sculptor Alfie Bradley as part of a campaign to remove 100,000 knives off the streets through a national amnesty.

A pair of giant gloves signed by England goalkeeper Joe Hart helped raise £7,000 at a charity ball held in honour of a teenager who died during a fitness training session. The glitzy affair was held as a tribute to Matthew Dewhurst. Matthew, of St Martins, near Oswestry, was a rugby-mad music scholar at Ellesmere College when he died from young sudden cardiac death at the age of 17 in 2012.

His parents Chris and Sue launched a fund-raising and health awareness campaign, saying a simple preventative health check could have saved Matthew's life. The gloves signed by former Shrewsbury Town stopper Hart went for £460.

Doubts over services



Eddie the Eagle attended a Marches School educational event



Hope House Children's Hospice's 21st birthday celebrations were a big success



Trials were held for wind farm equipment convoys



Councillor Malcolm Douglass has a go on a coracle



An Ascot Ladies Day event was held at Oswestry Cricket Club to raise funds for the club



Oswestry's mayor had a breakfast surprise

OSWESTRY Town Council indicated in July that it would not be taking on the running of the town's closure-threatened library and leisure centre.

Shropshire Council said at the time it would no longer run the services and had asked parish and town councils to take on the responsibility.

But the town council said, although the decision was not final, it was likely it would not be taking on the running of the two services after being warned by the government to protect taxpayers from excessive precept increases.

Mayor Paul Milner said the advice came from Marcus Jones MP, parliamentary under secretary of state for local government. In order to have provided the services, the town council would have had to have increased its council tax by 260 per cent. It would mean the average band D property would have seen its

July & August

bills increase from £69.92 to £181.16 per year. However the council was looking to take on youth services, open spaces, play areas and heritage sites.

Councillor Milner said: "We understand Oswestry Library, as a statutory service of Shropshire Council, is not under threat and therefore at this time we believe it is best for it to be continued to be run and funded by Shropshire Council. Oswestry Leisure Centre is a long term, complex agreement and is part of a county wide network that we see no mutual benefits by becoming involved."

Councillor Milner confirmed the council had expressed an interest in potential land swaps in order to consider taking on the town's various open spaces.

A drop-in session was arranged to spell out how the transportation of huge wind farm parts over the summer would affect roads in the Oswestry and Welshpool areas.

Developers behind two Mid Wales wind farm projects organised the event at Pant Memorial Hall.

The event included information about the delivery plans and timings of convoys carrying turbine components.

Trials were also staged in July to ensure the convoys could pass through the region.

Hope House Children's Hospice raised nearly £60,000 when it celebrated its 21st birthday in style with a huge party and then a fun day.

A massive marquee to seat hundreds of guests was set up at the British Ironwork Centre near Oswestry when a ball was held to celebrate the Morda-based hospice's landmark birthday. And the fun continued the following day when visitors from near and far enjoyed a family fun day at the British Ironwork Centre.

During the Saturday evening black tie event a silent auction, a "loud" auction with TV antiques expert and Halls Auctioneers director Jeremy Lamond and a raffle boosted hospice

funds. Visitors enjoyed a whole array of attractions and activities during the family fun day. Lynsey Kilvert from the hospice said the celebrations resulted in the best fundraising weekend event ever.

Coracles were spinning at a brand new event in Welshpool. Welshpool Town Council's Canal and Food event was held on the Montgomery Canal through the town. A group coracle racing event saw local teams and groups compete in a series of coracle challenges on the canal at Welshpool Wharf. Meanwhile, back on dry land there were food stalls set up on Church Street Car Park. Councillor Malcolm Douglass had a go at rowing a coracle to publicise the event.

Business leaders, education bosses and council chiefs enjoyed breakfast together to welcome Oswestry's mayor to his new role. The business breakfast at the Oswestry campus of North Shropshire College also doubled as a celebration to mark Councillor Paul Milner's appointment as town mayor.

The celebration came as something of a sur-

prise to the new mayor, who didn't know the event had been organised in his honour. During the business breakfast the mayor was given a certificate awarding him honorary membership of Oswestry Chamber of Commerce.

A combination of fascinators, finery and fabulous frocks took over a cricket club to mark Royal Ascot ladies day. The fun event was held at Oswestry Cricket Club and was once again well supported by the local community.

The ladies day event had been held at Oswestry Cricket Club for more than five years to help raise funds for the club.

It was 28 years since his efforts at the Winter Olympics transformed Eddie "The Eagle" Edwards into a national hero - and the ski-jumper was still inspiring the next generation.

The iconic British sportsman was one of the speakers at the Marches Academy Trust Festival of Education held in Oswestry.

The festival was attended by thousands of students and teachers from schools across the region.



John Jenkins and Sue Newham were unimpressed with fly tippers



Jeff Brook took part in a motorcycle event at Oswestry's Park Hall Showground



Debi Clutton, Pat Stackhouse and Julie Roberts in the new Baschurch Day Unit at Oswestry Orthopaedic Hospital

New healthcare plea



Edinburgh Fringe Festival regulars Dru and Terry Cripps were lined up to present a heritage event in Oswestry



Students at the Marches School celebrated GCSE results



The sun shone on Guilsfield Show

OSWESTRY'S mayor made a plea for the town's minor injuries unit to have longer hours and to stay open during weekend afternoons.

Councillor Paul Milner said the unit was an excellent facility but wanted to see it have the same hours as similar units in Shropshire.

His call followed a visit to Oswestry from a Bridgnorth woman who went to the unit in the evening only to find it shut. The unit in Bridgnorth opens from 8am until 9.30pm seven days a week while the one in Ludlow is open from 8am to 8pm seven days a week.

The call for longer hours was part of Councillor Milner's campaign for the best health care for people living in and around Oswestry.

Shropshire Community Health NHS Trust spokesman Andy Rogers said: "The opening hours for each of our minor injuries units are set by a number of factors, such as the demand

September & October

for services in a particular area and by the level of service that we are commissioned to provide. We recognise that demand for services change and are responsive to that local need and in future we may want to have more equity among those services."

Remain campaigners planning a legal challenge to delay Britain's exit from the European Union were "refusing to accept the will of the people", Montgomeryshire MP Glyn Davies said. Mr Davies said efforts to prevent Theresa May invoking Article 50 and beginning the process of Britain leaving the European Union were "constitutionally very dangerous".

It came after around 1,400 people contributed more than £50,000 to the 'People's Challenge' to prepare a written case for the High Court.

Mr Davies said that the public believed the referendum vote was to stay or leave the European Union, and the result should be

respected. The Montgomeryshire MP added: "Technically a referendum is advisory but all the people who voted thought they were voting for a decision and I think if Theresa May does not invoke Article 50 it would cause outrage, not just throughout Leave voters but quite a few people who voted Remain."

Hundreds of bikers roared into the Oswestry area bringing an economic boost to the town.

More than 600 Honda Goldwing enthusiasts descended on Oswestry Showground at Park Hall for The Goldwing Owners Club of Great Britain Festival 2016. The bikers spent the Bank Holiday Weekend in the area with many taking the opportunity to come into Oswestry, bringing a boost to traders.

The first patients were treated in new £15.1 million facilities at Oswestry Orthopaedic Hospital. The theatre and ward development at Gobowen-based hospital had been under construction for more than a year. The project marked a major milestone as the Baschurch Day Unit – one of the new departments within

the building – welcomed its first patients. Pat Stackhouse, from Churchstoke, was one of the first to arrive ahead of planned hip surgery.

Joy and relief was evident as students in the Oswestry and Welshpool areas opened their brown envelopes with their GCSE results inside. Schools across Oswestry, North Shropshire and Mid Wales reported excellent results for pupils. Moreton Hall School, near Oswestry, saw straight A* and As in every subject. There were 233 students who received GCSE results at The Marches School in Oswestry. Students achieved beyond national expectations across eight subjects throughout the curriculum.

Fly tippers left the owners of a cider orchard with an expensive mess to get rid of. An orchard in Wern, near Pool Quay, Welshpool, was targeted by fly tippers with about 50 black and red bags of moss, grit and earth left in the entrance, along with old slates and some pieces of wood. John Jenkins, who runs Old Monty's Cider and started the orchard seven years ago, said: "This mess is absolutely terrible. It's

going to cost us a lot of money to get rid of the waste. There's no need for it. No need for it at all." Sue Newham, of Keep Wales Tidy, also visited the orchard and said: "Small businesses in Mid Wales have a hard enough job making ends meet. Having to bear the extra expense and worry of dealing with dumped waste makes life really difficult for them."

Hundreds of people flocked to a bumper village show. Organisers said this year's Guilsfield Show had been the busiest and most successful to date.

Edinburgh Fringe regulars, Pimp\$ouls, were announced as presenters of the Oswestry Heritage Bake Off. Father and son duo, Terry Cripps and Dru Cripps-Hughes, were looking forward to honing their improvisational skills in the kitchen as presenters of Oswestry's take on the BBC's Great British Bake Off.

Produced by HOOOH Community Group, the Oswestry Heritage Bake Off was being filmed as part of the town's programme of activities to mark Heritage Open Days.

Top prize for council



Pharmacy staff were spreading Halloween fun



There were plenty in Oswestry and Welshpool wearing pink for charity



Des James and actress Vanessa Redgrave met at an awards event



Motorcyclist Chris Lee was injured in a crash



Members and staff at Oswestry Town Council were celebrating a top accolade



Rail enthusiasts in Oswestry had reason to smile

SIMPLY the best – Oswestry town councillors were celebrating after they were named number one by the National Association of Local Councils.

A voting panel named Oswestry the Star Council of nearly 12,000 in England and Wales for the breadth of activities and events that it was responsible for.

Oswestry Mayor Paul Milner said: "We were delighted with the recognition for Oswestry Town Council, which is testament to the hard work of fellow councillors and staff and our partners and supporters."

Controversial plans which could see the closure of Welshpool's household waste recycling centre would create a "fly-tipping disaster area", campaigners claimed. Welshpool Town Council was objecting to any reductions to the recycling centres anywhere in Powys and had announced a public meeting would be held to

November & December

air concerns. Welshpool Town Councillor Graham Breeze called for residents to turn out in force at the meeting. He said: "The town council has called the public meeting and invited Powys County Council officers to attend and explain themselves. This is an opportunity to let everyone know just how strongly the community feels about any threat to household waste recycling centres in North Powys. The county will become a fly-tipping disaster area if we allow Powys County Council to go ahead with this scheme."

Montgomeryshire Assembly Member Russell George stepped into the row, raising his concerns with Mark Drakeford AM, the Welsh Government Minister responsible for local government.

He said: "I have been inundated by complaints by constituents in relation to the consultation currently being conducted by Powys County Council relating to household waste,

which could potentially result in the closure of a site at either Newtown or Welshpool.

"There are now serious concerns that the potential closure of the site at either Newtown or Welshpool will result in an increase in fly-tipping and a reduction in recycling rates in the area due to the fact that the nearest recycling centre will be an unacceptable distance away."

Customers who might already have felt green around the gills before picking up their medication probably felt even worse after witnessing the spooky goings on at a pharmacy. Staff at Rowlands Pharmacy, in Chirk, near Oswestry, got into the spirit of Halloween by dressing up for the occasion. Predominately transformed into pumpkins, staff decided to don bright orange attire in a bid to raise funds for the NSPCC. The team also organised a raffle as they aimed to carve out some real Halloween cheer for customers.

Fundraisers around Oswestry and Welshpool once again supported Wear it Pink Day to support the Breast Cancer Now charity.

Among the fundraisers was Oswestry woman Irene Eke. More than 20 years ago she was told she only had a 10 per cent chance of surviving her breast cancer. But survive she did and since then she has supported the annual Wear it Pink Day This year's Wear it Pink day was a double reason to celebrate for Irene, also marking 30 years as receptionist at GHP Legal in Willow Street.

A motorcyclist was campaigning for the banning of spotlights on agricultural vehicles on the roads after saying he was blinded by one on a tractor. Chris Lee, from Oswestry, lost control of his bike on the A49 near Dorington and was taken to hospital with wrist and neck injuries. Mr Lee says he was lucky to be alive. "A tractor came towards me with not only its headlights but its spotlights on," he said. "It was a huge vehicle and I was blinded by the lights. "When I could see again I was on a bend and the bike just went from under me."

Actress Vanessa Redgrave pledged to support the family of Cheryl James in their call

for a public inquiry into a culture of bullying at the Deepcut army barracks. The movie star presented Cheryl's father Des James with a human rights award at a ceremony in London. She then chatted to him backstage to ask how she could help with the next stage of getting justice for four young soldiers found dead at the Surrey barracks. Mr James, from Llanyrnech near Oswestry, said he had been overwhelmed. "I had no idea that Miss Redgrave would be presenting our award," he said. "She has asked me to get in touch with her and keep her informed." Mr James and his wife Doreen have been seeking answers since their daughter died on November 27, 1995 – just days after her 18th birthday.

Railway enthusiasts said they were on the right track to reopen Oswestry's rail line as a major tourist attraction. The upbeat message came after a recently restored section of the line was officially opened. Volunteers said the reopening signalled a step forward in their ambitious dream to restore the railway.

Gadgets for party time

SET THE SCENE FOR A PARTY TO REMEMBER THIS FESTIVE PERIOD WITH THE HELP OF THESE NIFTY GADGETS. . .

ROBOT ROCK

Star Wars C-3PO Bluetooth Speaker, £149, Selfridges (in store only)

Make your party out of this world with the help of this C-3PO speaker. The shiny gold speaker is about the size and shape of a human's head - meaning, if nothing else, pesky wine glasses and plates won't be able to be perched on it - and comes on a black stand. Once you've locked on to a Bluetooth connection via a tablet or smartphone, C-3PO will let you know by a flash of his eyes and a quick blast of the Star Wars opening theme music, before leaving you to hook up to your own playlists or switch to a radio station.

HAVE SOME BOTTLE

Wine Cooler, £69.99, Currys

Canapes, beers, cakes... throwing a party can often mean forfeiting much-needed fridge space. A wine cooler is an investment requiring room, as well as the initial outlay, but if you host regularly, it could free up your fridge. This one by Currys holds up to eight bottles and is set so the wine is kept at the optimum temperature. If nothing else, buying one is a valid excuse to stock up on some fizz.

TRIP THE LIGHT FANTASTIC

iDance BB10(BK) Disco Lights Bluetooth Party Ball, currently £49.99, down from £59.99, Argos

You'll need to dim the lights to use this compact gadget - and for two good reasons.

Firstly, once it's plugged into the mains, you can set the party ball to cycle through a pretty light sequence, spinning patterns onto your walls and ceilings. And secondly, to hide your blushes if you plan on using the karaoke function too. There are two sockets for microphones - though just one mic is included - and you can stream songs to sing along to via a Bluetooth connection and

hum, harmonise or humiliate yourself to your heart's content.

LIGHTBULB MOMENT

Party Lights, £9.95, prezzybox.com

If you haven't time to deck your halls for a party, this light bulb is a quick fix to set the scene. It'll screw in to standard bayonet fittings so all you need to do is replace your existing bulb with this one. Then switch on the lights, stand back and admire the light display.

CHOCOS AWAY

Gourmet Gadgetry Chocolate Fountain, currently £29.99, down from £32.99, Lakeland

Who needs a buffet or canapes when you can provide a molten chocolate shower to dunk fruit, biscuits or marshmallows into? This chocolate fountain by Lakeland has three tiers for the chocolate to glide down. Melt your chocolate first - you'll need at least 900g to get the fountain in full flow - and then when the motor is on, add the sweet stuff to the stainless steel tiers and dive in before anyone else has a chance.

INTO THE LIGHT

ProSound LED Pod Disco Light, currently £29.99, down £49.99, Maplin

Bring the party home with you with the help of some fancy lights. This LED set is easy to assemble and small enough to cart from room to room. Although hexagonal in design, each of the six light pods can connect to each other to create different shapes. Left alone, the pod will perform a multi-coloured light display, but it also responds to sound. If that doesn't cut it, you can also manually adjust the speed of the light display.

APP OF THE WEEK

Spotify, available from iTunes

Whether you pay or put up with the adverts in return for a free service, Spotify makes it very easy to stream music and create playlists. If inspiration for party songs is hard to find, search for other people's playlists, or create a group list and ask your guests to add their favourite tracks to it.

Bluetooth Party Ball

This LED set is easy to assemble and small enough to cart from room to room. Although hexagonal in design, each of the six light pods can connect to each other to create different shapes. Left alone, the pod will perform a multi-coloured light display, but it also responds to sound. If that doesn't cut it, you can also manually adjust the speed of the light display.

LED Pod lights

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Light Bulb Moment

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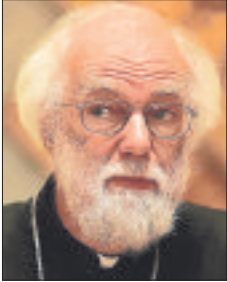



Into the Light

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Christmas Eve

BBC 1	BBC 2	ITV	Ch4	Ch5
 <p>Michael McIntyre's Big Christmas Show, shown at 7.25pm</p> <p>6.00 Breakfast A round-up of national and international news, plus sports reports, weather forecasts and arts and entertainment features. Including NewsWatch at 7.45. 10.00 Saturday Kitchen 11.30 FILM: A Christmas Carol (2009) Animated fantasy, starring Jim Carrey. ★ ★ 1.00 BBC News: Weather. 1.15 Winter: Earth's Seasonal Secrets Documentary exploring how various animals rise to the challenge of surviving winter. 2.15 FILM: The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian (2008) The four Pevensie children return to the magical land of Narnia to help the rightful king reclaim his throne. Fantasy adventure sequel, starring Ben Barnes and William Moseley. ★ ★ ★</p> <p>4.30 Shrek the Halls (R) 4.50 Penguins of Madagascar (2014) ★ ★ ★</p> <p>6.15 BBC News 6.25 Midlands Today; Weather</p> <p>6.30 Pointless Celebrities 7.25 Michael McIntyre's Big Christmas Show Michael puts a festive spin on his weekend variety entertainment show, with live performances by Alfie Boe, Michael Ball, Catherine Tate and Harry Enfield.</p> <p>8.25 EastEnders Phil is given some tough love by both Shirley and Denise. Linda receives devastating family news and Dot closes up for the final time. Donna is touched by a dinner invitation.</p> <p>9.00 David Walliams Celebrates Dame Shirley Bassey The comedy actor hosts this special evening of entertainment in which the veteran singer performs some of her best-loved songs and looks back on her 60 years in showbusiness.</p> <p>10.05 Peter Kay's Christmas Comedy Shuffle A festive collection of clips from the comedian's TV career, featuring highlights from Car Share and Phoenix Nights, as well as a seasonal singalong with Paul McCartney.</p> <p>10.50 The Vicar of Dibley Alice suggests an unconventional nativity play starring herself and Hugo as Mary and Joseph, and adds an extra touch of authenticity by going into labour mid-performance. (R)</p> <p>11.30 BBC News; Weather.</p> <p>11.45 Midnight Mass: from St Chad's Birmingham The Most Rev Bernard Longley, Archbishop of Birmingham, leads a Christmas Eve Midnight Mass broadcast live from St Chad's Cathedral.</p> <p>1.00 FILM: Surviving Christmas (2004) ★ 2.25 Weather for the Week Ahead 2.30 BBC News</p>	 <p>Rowan Williams features in Carols from King's, shown at 5.45pm</p> <p>6.15 FILM: Mars Needs Moms (2011) Animated sci-fi adventure, with the voice of Seth Robert Dusky. ★ ★ 7.40 The NFL Show (R) 8.10 FILM: Hans Christian Andersen (1952) Musical, starring Danny Kaye. ★ ★ ★ 10.00 Robot Wars Dara O Briain and Angela Scanlon present the final. (R) 11.00 Wallace & Gromit: A Close Shave (R) 11.30 Nigella's Christmas Kitchen (R) 12.00 The Cook Who Changed Our Lives A profile of Milanese cook and food writer Anna Del Conte. (R) 1.00 FILM: Splash! (1984) Romantic fantasy comedy, with Tom Hanks and Daryl Hannah. ★ ★ ★ 2.45 Snow Chick: A Penguin's Tale Following the first months in the life of an emperor penguin. (R)</p> <p>3.45 Gorilla Family and Me Part one of two. Gordon Buchanan spends time with Grauer's gorillas. (R)</p> <p>4.45 Gorilla Family and Me Part two of two. Gordon Buchanan revisits the apes. (R)</p> <p>5.45 Carols from King's The traditional annual carol service at the Chapel of King's College, Cambridge.</p> <p>7.00 Dad's Army Mainwaring's men face the might of a rival platoon in a battle to prove their worth. Arthur Lowe and John Le Mesurier play the superannuated soldiers. (R)</p> <p>8.00 Alan Bennett's Diaries A candid profile of the writer, following him in his home village in Yorkshire, to his community library in Primrose Hill and during a trip to New York.</p> <p>9.00 The Lady in the Van (2015) Premiere. The true story of Alan Bennett's friendship with an eccentric homeless woman, whom he befriended before allowing her to park her van outside his Camden home. Starring Maggie Smith and Alex Jennings. ★ ★ ★</p> <p>10.40 The National Lottery Live The all-important winning numbers are revealed.</p> <p>10.50 Christmas TOTP2 Special Mark Radcliffe presents festive performances from the Top of the Pops archive, including classics by Slade, Wham!, Wizzard, East 17, Mud, the Jackson 5 and Johnny Mathis. (R)</p> <p>12.20 FILM: Viva Las Vegas (1964) A racing driver arrives in the gambling capital for a grand prix - but loses focus when he falls in love while working at a casino. Musical, starring Elvis Presley and Ann-Margret. ★ ★ ★ 1.40 Sign Zone: Countryfile Christmas special from Bamburgh Castle on the Northumberland Coast. (R) 2.40 Sign Zone: Holby City A blast from the past upsets Dom's plans for festivities with Isaac. (R) 3.40 This Is BBC Two Preview of upcoming programmes from BBC Two.</p>	 <p>David Walliams hosts the game show, Blankety Blank, on at 6.30pm</p> <p>6.00 CITV: Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids. (R) 6.10 Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids (R) 6.20 Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures (R) 6.35 Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures (R) 6.45 Super 4 (R) 6.55 Signed Stories (R) 7.05 Sooty (R) 7.10 Oddbods (R) 7.15 Oddbods (R) 7.25 Nerds & Monsters (R) 7.40 Nerds & Monsters (R) 7.55 Horrid Henry (R) 8.10 Horrid Henry (R) 8.25 Weekend at Christmas 9.25 Thunderbirds Are Go 9.50 The Chase (R) 10.50 You've Been Framed! With Bells On (R) 11.20 FILM: Despicable Me (2010) ★ ★ ★ 1.20 ITV News and Weather; Weather. 1.30 FILM: Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone (2001) Fantasy adventure, starring Daniel Radcliffe. ★ ★ ★</p> <p>4.20 One Hundred and One Dalmatians (1961) Disney animated adventure, with the voice of Betty Lou Gerson. ★ ★ ★ ★</p> <p>6.00 ITV News Central; Weather.</p> <p>6.15 ITV News and Weather 6.30 Blankety Blank David Walliams presents a one-off special revival of the 1970s game show in which contestants and a panel of celebrities must identify the missing word in a phrase.</p> <p>7.30 Coronation Street Aidan admits to Johnny he is in love with Maria while she heads to court, and Nick feels left out as Peter and Leanne reflect on old times.</p> <p>8.00 Birds of a Feather Sharon, Tracey and Dorian head to Morocco to track down Travis when he goes missing while on his gap year. Comedy, starring Pauline Quirke, Linda Robson and Lesley Joseph.</p> <p>9.00 Grantchester Christmas Special A bride-to-be reports the disappearance of her groom on their wedding day, drawing Sidney and Georgie into a case with echoes of an unsolved murder from nine years previously.</p> <p>10.30 Through the Keyhole Keith Lemon hosts a Christmas special of the game show, as celebrity panellists Shayne Ward, Kelly Brook and Johnny Vegas are asked to identify the homes of the rich and famous.</p> <p>11.30 ITV News and Weather; Weather.</p> <p>11.45 Christmas Carols on ITV Aled Jones joins the congregation of St Chad's church in Rochdale for their traditional candlelight Christmas Eve carol service.</p> <p>12.40 All Star Mr & Mrs Christmas Special (R) 1.30 FILM: Carry On Loving (1970) Comedy, starring Sid James and Hattie Jacques. ★ ★</p> <p>3.05 ITV Nightscreen Text-based information service.</p>	 <p>Alex Zane presents Rude Tube Christmas Cracker 2016, on at 10.00pm</p> <p>6.15 Olive, the Other Reindeer Animation, with the voice of Drew Barrymore. (R) 7.05 FILM: A Turtle's Tale: Sammy's Adventures (2010) ★ ★ ★ 8.40 Father Christmas (R) 9.10 Painting the Bear Hunt 9.15 Christmas Brunch With guests Tom Fletcher, Bill Turnbull, Emilia Fox and James Acaster. 12.15 Jamie's Ultimate Christmas Jamie Oliver demonstrates dishes for the festive season. (R) 1.15 The Simpsons Three festive shorts with the animated family. (R) 1.45 The Simpsons Four tales celebrating the festive season. (R) 2.15 The Simpsons A corporation buys Springfield Elementary School. (R) 2.45 FILM: Scrooged (1988) Comedy, starring Bill Murray. ★ ★ ★</p> <p>4.40 Channel 4 News 4.45 The Snowman (R) 5.15 The Snowman and the Snowdog (R)</p> <p>5.50 The Muppet Christmas Carol (1992) ★ ★ ★</p> <p>7.30 We're Going on a Bear Hunt Animated adventure, based on Michael Rosen's popular children's story of the same name, featuring the voice of Olivia Colman.</p> <p>8.00 Gogglesprogs Christmas Special Young TV viewers appraise the year's television programmes in this festive edition, from big news stories about the American Presidential election to TV's most popular hits.</p> <p>9.00 8 Out of 10 Cats Does Countdown Christmas Special Jimmy Carr hosts a festive edition of the comedy panel show, with guests Kathy Burke and Russell Howard joining Sean Lock and Jon Richardson.</p> <p>10.00 Rude Tube Christmas Cracker 2016 Alex Zane and his canine companion Bah Hum-Pug present some of the most popular seasonal internet videos, including a rocket-powered reindeer and a Christmas message from Björk.</p> <p>11.00 Trigger Happy Christmas Special Dom Joly returns with a festive edition of the hidden-camera show, featuring new characters alongside the "big mobile man", who now has a smartphone with apps and video-calling.</p> <p>11.30 The Inbetweeners The gang goes on the infamous sociology and geography field trip to Swanage, and Will takes a shine to new girl Lauren - but she is only interested in Simon. (R)</p> <p>12.05 The Inbetweeners (R) 12.35 The Inbetweeners (R) 1.00 The Inbetweeners (R) 1.30 Friday Night Dinner (R) 1.55 Friday Night Dinner (R) 2.25 The Last Leg Christmas Special (R) 3.20 My Crazy Christmas Lights (R) 4.10 Location, Location, Location (R) 5.05 The Restoration Man (R) 5.55 Prep & Landing (R)</p>	 <p>Eamonn Holmes, Eamonn & Ruth: A Million Pound Christmas, on at 9.00pm</p> <p>6.00 Milkshake! 8.30 SpongeBob SquarePants Plankton tries to ruin Christmas with a special fruitcake that brings out the dark side of anyone who eats it. 9.05 FILM: Doctor Zhivago (1965) A physician is torn between loyalty to his wife and his love for another woman during the Russian Revolution. David Lean's epic drama, starring Omar Sharif and Julie Christie. Edited for language. ★ ★ ★ ★ 12.50 FILM: The Vikings (1958) A Norse warrior fights to claim the Northumbrian throne, unaware his rival for the crown is really his half-brother. Adventure, starring Kirk Douglas, Tony Curtis, Janet Leigh, Ernest Borgnine, James Donald, Alexander Knox, Maxine Audley and Frank Thring. ★ ★ ★ ★</p> <p>3.05 Jason and the Argonauts (1963) Fantasy adventure, starring Todd Armstrong. ★ ★ ★</p> <p>5.10 Scrooge - A Christmas Carol (1951) Charles Dickens' fantasy, starring Alastair Sim. (b/w) ★ ★ ★ ★</p> <p>6.55 Andre Rieu: Christmas in London A festive concert by the Dutch violinist and the Johann Strauss Orchestra, featuring carols as well as songs including Leonard Cohen's Hallelujah and the Concierto de Aranjuez.</p> <p>8.00 The Yorkshire Vet at Christmas The residents of Skeldale ask Julian Norton and Peter Wright to turn on the town's Christmas lights, and find a donkey for the town square nativity scene. Last in the series.</p> <p>9.00 Eamonn & Ruth: A Million Pound Christmas Eamonn Holmes and Ruth Langford discover the most expensive ways in which people can enjoy the season of goodwill, beginning by sampling a £10,000 advent calendar.</p> <p>10.00 Greatest Ever Christmas Movies Countdown of the best festive films, from It's a Wonderful Life to Bad Santa. Featuring contributions by Gremkins star Zach Galifianak and Miracle on 34th Street's Mara Wilson. (R)</p> <p>12.55 FILM: Scrooge - A Christmas Carol (1951) Charles Dickens' fantasy, starring Alastair Sim. ★ ★ ★ ★ 2.25 SuperCasino Live interactive gaming. 4.00 The Trafford Centre: Countdown to Christmas The staff has just 10 nights to put up the Christmas decorations. (R) 4.50 House Doctor A couple from Milton Keynes hope to move to France. (R) 5.20 Angels of Jarm (R) 5.25 Roary the Racing Car Mr Carbetter calls in reinforcements. (R) 5.35 Milkshake! Bop Box (R) 5.40 Peppa Pig (R) 5.45 Paw Patrol Animated action adventure.</p>

Diaries are write stuff



Keeping a diary can boost your child's writing skills

IF YOU WANT YOUR CHILDREN TO GET BETTER AT WRITING, BUYING THEM A DIARY FOR CHRISTMAS COULD BE A BIG HELP, WRITES LISA SALMON

Letting thoughts and feelings flood out onto the pages of a diary can be a valuable emotional release - but for children, expressing emotions isn't the only huge benefit of diary writing.

Pupils who keep a diary are almost twice as likely to write above the expected level for their age as children who don't keep one (27.1% vs 15.5%).

In addition, a report by the National Literacy Trust (NLT) found diary writing allows children to choose what they want to write, and 82% of girls and 76% of boys say if they can choose the subject, writing is more fun.

CHRISTMAS DIARY

Because of the clear benefits of diary writing, the NLT is calling on parents to think about giving children a diary for Christmas.

"Encouraging children to keep a diary is a great way to get them excited about writing," says NLT director Jonathan Douglas.

"Writing about the best parts of their days, their friends, and their hopes and dreams can be fun for children. Diaries are also a great way to help children build resilience as they process their thoughts and express their feelings.

"We're encouraging anyone buying presents for a child this Christmas to give the gift of a diary. You'll be giving them a platform to express themselves through words and the tools to become a better writer and do well at school.

"The more children write, the better at writing they'll become. And you never know - your child could produce the next *Diary Of A Wimpy Kid*!"

VIVID MEMORIES

The diary campaign is supported by children's author and former Children's Laureate Jacqueline Wilson, who kept a diary herself as a teenager and has included diary writing in her books, including diary entries in her children's fiction series Tracy Beaker, and her own diary entries in an autobiographical account, *My Secret Diary*.

"I still have the diaries I wrote as a teenager. I wince at times when I read them, but they bring back those long-ago days so vividly and help me remember what it's like to be young," she says.

"Diary writing is a brilliant idea for children, because it helps them organise their thoughts and express themselves. They get used to writing every day and become fluent. They often enjoy using a special book and pen and feel grown-up keeping their own private diary."

DIARY DECLINE

The NLT report found diary writing to be more popular with girls, and more broadly with younger children of both genders - three times as many girls as boys keep a diary (29.5% vs 10.3%), while twice as many pupils in their final years of primary school write in a diary compared to pupils in their last years of secondary school (29.4% of pupils aged 8-11 vs 11.9% of pupils aged 14-16).

While the research also highlighted a drop in the number of children writing in a diary over the past five years, from one child in four (24.5% in 2010) to one child in five (20.3% in 2015), it also found that almost half of children (46.8%) are still writing something in private in their free time.

Douglas says: "Diaries give children a chance to express themselves and provide a unique opportunity to get them excited about writing - something which is important as the number of children writing in diaries has declined in recent years.

"Diaries are also a great way to help children build resilience as they process their thoughts and express their feelings."

Wilson says she always advises would-be writers to keep a daily diary as it gets them into a regular writing habit.

BBC 1



Strictly Come Dancing Christmas Special, shown at 6.45pm

6.00 **Breakfast** 9.00 **CBeebies: The Nutcracker** Two children embark a magical Christmas Eve adventure. 9.45 **Legend of the Boneknapper Dragon** Animated short film based on How to Train Your Dragon. (R) 10.00 **Christmas Day Service - Live from Bristol Cathedral** A traditional Holy Communion service. 11.00 **The Christmas Big Sing** 11.40 **BBC News**; Weather. 11.50 **FILM: The Croods** (2013) Animated comedy, with the voices of Nicolas Cage and Ryan Reynolds. ★★ 1.20 **Shaun the Sheep: The Farmer's Llamas** Shaun causes mayhem at a country fair. (R) 1.50 **Top of the Pops Christmas** The year's most successful chart acts. 2.50 **BBC News**; Weather.

BBC 2



Duncan Glendinning, Victorian Bakers at Christmas, on at 9.30pm

6.40 **Countryfile** (R) 7.35 **FILM: The Cat in the Hat** (2003) Comedy fantasy, starring Mike Myers. ★★ 8.50 **FILM: Tom Thumb** (1958) Children's musical fantasy, starring Russ Tamblyn. ★★ 10.20 **FILM: Bee Movie** (2007) Animated comedy, with the voice of Jerry Seinfeld. ★★ 11.40 **Carols from King's** The traditional annual carol service at the Chapel of King's College, Cambridge. (R) 12.55 **Wild Tales From the Village** Animals that live near a remote French village. (R) 1.55 **The Good Life** Margo and Jerry spend Christmas with Tom and Barbara. (R) 2.25 **FILM: The Artist** (2011) Oscar-winning silent drama, starring Jean Dujardin. (b/w) ★★

ITV



Paul O'Grady: For the Love of Dogs at Christmas, on at 6.45pm

6.00 **CITV: Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids** (R) 6.10 **Grizzly Tales for Gruesome Kids** (R) 6.20 **Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures** (R) 6.35 **Dino Dan: Trek's Adventures** (R) 6.45 **Super 4** (R) 6.55 **Sooty** (R) 7.10 **Oddbods** (R) 7.15 **Oddbods** (R) 7.20 **Almost Naked Animals** (R) 7.45 **Horrid Henry** (R) 8.00 **Horrid Henry** (R) 8.15 **Horrid Henry** (R) 8.25 **Weekend at Christmas** 9.25 **Countrywise: Guide to Britain** (R) 9.55 **FILM: Despicable Me 2** (2013) Animated comedy sequel, with the voice of Steve Carell. ★★ 11.55 **FILM: Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets** (2002) Fantasy adventure sequel, starring Daniel Radcliffe. ★★

Ch4



Richard Ayoade presents Travel Man: 48 Hours in Florence, on at 8.00pm

6.20 **Prep & Landing: Naughty v Nice** (R) 6.40 **The Bear** (R) 7.10 **Painting the Bear Hunt** 7.15 **FILM: Animals United** (2010) ★★ 8.55 **The Simpsons** (R) 9.20 **The Simpsons** (R) 9.50 **The Simpsons** (R) 10.20 **The Simpsons** (R) 10.50 **Ice Age: A Mammoth Christmas** (R) 11.15 **Painting the Bear Hunt** 11.20 **Father Christmas** (R) 11.50 **The Snowman** (R) 12.20 **FILM: The Sword in the Stone** (1963) Disney animated adventure, with the voice of Rickie Sorenson. ★★ 2.05 **The Alternative Christmas Message** Counterpoint to the Queen's broadcast. 2.15 **Channel 4 News** Including sport and weather. 2.20 **FILM: It's a Wonderful Life** (1946) Fantasy drama, starring James Stewart. (b/w) ★★

Ch5



Cliff Richard features in Britain's Favourite Xmas Songs, on at 6.15pm

6.10 **Milkshake!** 7.35 **FILM: An American in Paris** (1951) Oscar-winning musical, with Gene Kelly and Leslie Caron. ★★ 9.50 **FILM: On the Town** (1949) Musical following the romantic misadventures of three sailors looking for love while enjoying a day's shore leave in New York. Starring Gene Kelly, Frank Sinatra and Jules Munshin. ★★ 11.50 **FILM: Scrooge** (1970) A miserly man is taught the error of his ways by a host of spectral visitors. Musical adaptation of Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol, starring Albert Finney and Alec Guinness. ★★ 2.10 **FILM: The Wizard of Oz** (1939) Musical fantasy, with Judy Garland, Ray Bolger, Jack Haley and Frank Morgan. ★★

Early View

Prime Time

Late View

3.00 The Queen's Christmas Broadcast

3.10 Frozen (2013) Premiere. A princess tries to save her sister, whose magic has plunged the kingdom into eternal winter. Disney animated adventure, with the voice of Kristen Bell. ★★

4.45 The Great Christmas Bake Off

5.45 Doctor Who

6.45 Strictly Come Dancing Christmas Special

8.00 Call the Midwife Christmas special, in which the nurses of Nonnatus House travel to South Africa to help the struggling staff of a mission clinic faced with closure. Sinead Cusack guest stars.

9.30 EastEnders Any hopes of a merry Christmas seem slim with Phil's health deteriorating rapidly, Lee struggling with the burden of his secrets and the return of none other than Max Branning.

10.30 Mrs Brown's Boys Christmas Special Grandad's health causes concern, Mrs Brown steps in when a fire at the salon leaves Rory and Dino with nowhere to work, while Dermot faces stiff competition to win a contract.

11.00 The Best of Tracey Ullman's Show Highlights from the comedy sketch show, as well as some brand new material.

11.30 BBC News; Weather.

11.45 On Christmas Night Don Warrington reads the bible story of the shepherds' visit to the Christ Child from the Gospel of St Luke, and the Adventist Vocal Ensemble sing Sweet Little Jesus Boy.

11.50 Would I Lie to You? At Christmas (R)

12.20 **Have I Got a Bit More** 2016 **News for You** 1.05 **Citizen Khan** (R) 1.35 **FILM: While You Were Sleeping** (1995) ★★ 3.10 **Weather for the Week Ahead** 3.15 **BBC News**

4.00 Dancing the Nutcracker - Inside the Royal Ballet

5.30 Sign Zone: The Queen's Christmas Broadcast (R)

5.40 The Morecambe and Wise Christmas Show 1976 (R)

6.45 Christmas University Challenge

7.15 Blackadder's Christmas Carol Kindly Victorian pushover Ebenezer Blackadder is visited by the Spirit of Christmas and gains an insight into the dastardly deeds of his ancestors. Starring Rowan Atkinson. (R)

8.00 Dad's Army Pompous Captain Mainwaring proves he is a softie at heart by organising a Christmas treat for the struggling senior citizens of Walmington-on-Sea. (R)

8.30 Gospel Christmas Gregory Porter and Beverley Knight host a concert from St John at Hackney, featuring gospel versions of classic Christmas songs. With Katy B, Shaun Escoffery and vocal quintet Vadé.

9.30 Victorian Bakers at Christmas The bakers prepare Victorian Christmas recipes, including twelfth cakes, bread-based punch, roasts to feed entire communities, and mince pies made with either beef or tripe.

10.30 QI XL Sandi Toksvig and Alan Davies are joined by Josh Widdicombe, Susan Calman and Matt Lucas for an extended festive special, with a series of tough questions on the subject of Noel.

11.15 Great Expectations (2012) An orphan is given the chance to rise through high society with the assistance of a mysterious benefactor. Period drama, with Jeremy Irvine and Helena Bonham Carter. ★★

1.15 **FILM: A Hard Day's Night** (1964) (b/w) ★★ 2.40 **This Is BBC Two**

3.00 The Queen's Christmas Broadcast

Her Majesty's annual address.

3.10 The Lion King (1994) A lion cub prince flees after his father is murdered, but returns as an adult to reclaim his throne. Disney animated musical, with the voice of Matthew Broderick. ★★

4.55 ITV News and Weather

5.15 You've Been Framed! Harry's Naughty List Comical clips for Christmas, narrated by Harry Hill.

5.45 Emmerdale An unexpected recording ruins the Dingle Christmas.

6.45 Paul O'Grady: For the Love of Dogs at Christmas The comedian visits Battersea Dogs & Cats Home at Christmas, where he comes to the aid of a pregnant pug and tries to get a snuggle-toothed shih tzu the royal seal of approval.

7.45 ITV News and Weather

8.00 Coronation Street Leanne is thrilled when Toyah returns to the cobbles, while Peter and Nick wind up brawling in the street, and Bethany collapses in the ginnel from an overdose.

9.00 Maigret's Dead Man Rowan Atkinson stars as the Parisian detective in the second in a run of adaptations of Georges Simenon's books. A series of anonymous phone calls is linked to a mysterious corpse.

11.00 Love Actually (2003) Interlinked tales of several people in search of love. Richard Curtis's romantic comedy, with Hugh Grant, Martine McCutcheon, Emma Thompson, Colin Firth, Bill Nighy and Liam Neeson. ★★

1.30 **FILM: King Kong** (2005) Peter Jackson's remake of the fantasy adventure, with Naomi Watts and Jack Black. ★★ 4.25 **ITV Nightscreen**

4.55 The Snowman and the Snowdog

Animated sequel to classic festive tale *The Snowman*. (R)

5.25 We're Going on a Bear Hunt Animated adventure, based on Michael Rosen's book of the same name. (R)

6.00 Home Alone (1990)

A boy is left to defend his home from burglars when his family jets off to Paris and accidentally leaves him behind. Comedy, starring Macaulay Culkin, Joe Pesci and Daniel Stern. ★★

8.00 Travel Man: 48 Hours in Florence Rebel Scalliet joins Richard Ayoade on a rapid-fire tour of the Italian city, racing past iconic artworks, climbing the city's cathedral, and rafting down the River Arno.

9.00 Gogglebox 2016 A look back at some of the highlights of this year's series, featuring regular armchair presenters Leon and June, Christopher and Stephen, and the Michaels family.

10.30 Alan Carr's Christmas Chatty Man With Scarlett Moffatt, Tom Hardy, Tom Daley, Gary Barlow, Dannii Minogue, Martin Kemp and the cast of *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*. With music from Emeli Sandé and Robbie Williams.

12.35 **FILM: Four Christmases** (2008) A couple struggle to make it through four family Christmases on the same day as they see each of their divorced parents in turn. Comedy, with Vince Vaughn and Reese Witherspoon. ★★ 2.05 **Rude Tube Christmas Cracker 2016** Some of the most popular Christmas-themed internet videos of all time. (R) 3.05 **Very British Problems at Christmas** Famous faces grumble about the festive season. (R) 4.00 **Location, Location, Location** Phil Spencer helps a couple searching for a home in south-west London. (R) 5.00 **Supershoppers** Andi Osho and Anna Richardson investigate winter fashion. (R) 5.25 **The Restoration Man** (R)

4.10 Singin' in the Rain

(1952) A silent-movie star tries to win the heart of an aspiring actress as the dawn of sound changes the film business for ever. Musical comedy, starring Gene Kelly and Debbie Reynolds. ★★

6.15 Britain's Favourite Xmas Songs A countdown of songs guaranteed to make any Christmas party go with a swing, including classics by the Jackson 5, Jona Lewie, Band Aid, the Pogues and Kirsty MacColl, and Slade. (R)

8.30 When Celebrities Go Pop A countdown of the 40 most memorable musical efforts by celebrities who have decided to diversify into music. The programme features performances by Mr T, Katie Price, Vinnie Jones, Sam Fox, Eddie 'The Eagle' Edwards, David Hasselhoff, an assortment of soap stars and Christopher Lee, who embarked on a second career as a heavy-metal singer in his 80s.

10.30 Dallas Buyers Club (2013) Premiere. A man diagnosed with HIV and given 30 days to live discovers that many treatments for his condition are not available in the US. With the aid of a transsexual Aids patient, he sets up a scheme to smuggle the drugs into the country and distribute them to those in need. Fact-based drama, starring Oscar winners Matthew McConaughey and Jared Leto, with Jennifer Garner and Steve Zahn. ★★

12.45 **Greatest Ever Christmas Songs** A celebratory compilation of some of the biggest festive songs of the last 50 years. (R) 1.10 **SuperCasino 3.10: Chris Tarrant: On the Xmas Express** (R) 4.00 **Now That's Funny!** (R) 4.50 **House Doctor** (R) 5.40 **Angels of Jarm** (R) 5.50 **Roary the Racing Car** (R)

Spare a thought for our wildlife this Christmas

FIFTY-SIX years ago, on December 15 1960, the robin was chosen as Britain's national bird. Last year, rather unimaginatively, it was chosen again, this time for England.

Nonetheless this iconic little garden bird is firmly entwined with the British psyche and loved by millions. The affection is returned from the robin, more perhaps than any other bird.

On the continent they tend to be skittish and shy and generally unapproachable, yet over here they are almost tame in many cases. Before the start of the 20th century, robins were also widely known by the name 'redbreast' for fairly obvious reasons and because of the old postmen's red tunics, our postal workers were known as robins. Just like postmen and women at this time of the year, robins seem ever-busy with both the males and females trying to keep territories throughout the winter.

Come spring, most pairs of robins will try and raise as many as three broods of chicks a year, but some manage as many as five. Ironically for one of the most brightly coloured of our resident birds, robins are closely related to one of the least colourful – the blackbird. Both are actually members of the thrush family and there are scores of birds around the world with the name robin, with few even distantly related to our bird. Robins are famous for their aggressiveness and males especially will fight to the death to maintain their territory. As I've mentioned before, young robins only begin to develop their red breast after they have grown to adult size.

This means they are less likely to be targeted by hostile adults and lose their life be-

ON THE WILDSIDE

with Ben Waddams



fore it really begins. However cats are more likely to put pay to that and they account more the greatest number of robin deaths each year; an absolute travesty. Unlike many birds and mammals which will come and go, robins tend to keep their territory and rarely stray far from in throughout their lives. Therefore it may well be true to say 'my robin' when talking about an individual bird in your garden.

Yet there is a way to be sure. Each robin's red breast is uniquely patterned and can (with difficulty) be recognised individually.

As far as keeping 'your' robin happy throughout the winter, this species is not picky and can be considered an omnivore, taking anything from fruit to spiders, seed to meal worms.

British robins will, as far as I know, never enter standard nest boxes with round entrance holes. They do however take readily to open-fronted boxes and these can help their cause.

So as I wish all my loyal readers (or reader) all the best and happy holidays, perhaps we can take the time over the festive season to remember the wildlife outside. Mild it may be, but we shouldn't be complacent. After all, just taking the robin into account, many attempts have been made to introduce these iconic birds to America, Australia and New Zealand. All have failed. I don't know about 'England's National Bird' but to be Britain's favourite, seems fitting, especially at this time of the year. Season's greetings, and thank you.



In the Bleak Midwinter – oil on board – by Ben Waddams

Warning given by organisation on drink-driving

ONE glass of wine can put a woman over the drink-drive limit, a Shropshire road safety organisation has warned.

In the wake of the Government's decision not to reduce drink-drive levels in line with the rest of Europe, TTC group says a single glass of 250ml of wine as served in pubs will put women over the legal limit.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling has announced that the Government would not reduce the limit from 80 to 50 similar to most countries because they do not want to penalise motorists for simply having "a glass of wine at the pub".

But bosses at TTC, based in Hadley Park which runs rehabilitation courses for convicted drink-drivers, say it is not worth running the risk.

Group director, Alan Prosser, said: "Alcohol strengths vary in different glass sizes and there are some stronger red and fortified wines.

"It is not so simple as to say a glass of wine is OK because it's not.

"Our advice and that of the Transport Department's own Think! campaign is to have none for the road.

"Even a small amount of alcohol can impair driving judgement and ability."

More than 200 motorists die each year due to drink-driving and motorists with a blood alcohol level between 50mg and 80mg are six times more likely to be involved in a fatal crash.

They are also twice likely to be involved in a traffic incident, says the TTC Group.

Around 25 lives could be saved and 95 serious injuries prevented if England followed Scotland's example to reduce the limit to 50mg, said Professor Richard Allsop in a report commissioned by the RAC and PACTS, Parliament's transport safety advisors.

The UK and Malta are the only other EU countries with higher drink drive limits with Malta currently considering lowering their limit.

Mr Prosser, whose organisation educates 330,000 motorists each year on behalf of police to improve their driving after a traffic incident, said: "The UK is isolated from mainstream opinion among all other members of the EU that lives can be saved if you reduce the level from 80 to 50."

The TTC Group has been campaigning for the reduction for many years and were joined by a wide range of road safety organisations, including Brake, RAC, and the AA.

There has been no reduction in drink-drive deaths since 2010 with 240 people killed and more than 8,000 casualties each year costing £800m.



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Single Women

REMEMBER: Calls cost £1.55 per minute plus your phone company's access charge. Texts cost £1.50 per message received.

JEAN, mature lady, genuine with many hobbies, slim, blonde and attractive. WLTm interesting gent with GSOH, must be cheerful, looks unimportant. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 424675 ☺

HI Gents, I'm Kelly, a down to earth lady, 35yrs, shapely brunette, seeking someone with GSOH, looks unimportant, any age. ACA, I promise! Tel: 0906 515 3024 Box 423035

CHRISTINE, 40, attractive slim sporty brunette seeks fit well built male. Call me let's see what the future brings. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 425061 ☺

NAUGHTY curvy 46yr old lady, outgoing and bubbly with a naughty side and lots of banter, WLTm chap 30+. If you are married even better. ACA. Tel: 0906 515 3012 Box 424543

LOUISE, 29, curvy red haired female, been hurt in the past seeks male to buy her flowers and mend her broken heart. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 425041 ☺

SARAH, 39yrs, married, seeking chap for no strings intimate times. Special friendship, mutual respect. Give me a call. Tel: 0906 515 3028 Box 408291

LYN, 47, curvy quiet sensitive brunette but with a wild side. It could be exciting to know me! Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 425013 ☺

TAMIKKA, mature black beauty, hourglass figure and open minded. Pls call if you are discreet, broad minded and nice. I can travel and accommodate. ACA. Tel: 0906 515 3004 Box 422365

RETIRE happy, caring, attractive female, likes gardening, travel, animals, comedy, seeks tall, funny, kind chap. Shropshire. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 411459

KAREN, 47, an attractive blue-eyed redhead, curvy size 16, likes films, football, puns, reading, seeking like-minded male for nights in/out, hope, fully more. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 425057 ☺

MELINDA, 52yrs, attractive and broad minded seeking chap any age for some fun. Couples also. Text only Mailbox: 4131946 ☺

AMANDA, 36, tall, slim, busty brunette seeks man, any age, any area, for discreet daytime fun. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 418117

KATIE 35yrs, slender well educated brunette seeks no strings mutual pleasure with gent. Must be discreet, married or single. ACA. Tel: 0906 515 3000 Box 419673

SANDRA, smart, sophisticated lady young looking 60s, genuine and kind seeks gent with GSOH, looks unimportant. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 424671 ☺

JANE, young 41, very broad minded seeks chap any age for discreet no strings fun, any age, no time wasters ACA. Tel No: 0906 515 3008 Box: 409715

CAROL, 40yrs 50s lady, young at heart, attractive and sexy (so I'm told!) Give me a call if you are a gent with GSOH. ACA. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 424783 ☺

SOPHIA young 40yrs, married but bored, seeks discreet adult fun, any area, all calls answered. Tel: 0906 515 3016 Box: 413399

SUE, 60s lady, calling all gents who seek a mature solvent stylish lady, I can wine and dine you, you will have a nice time, call or text me. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 424781 ☺

EMILY, mature well educated lady, blonde and smart and broad minded seeks gent any age for no strings fun. ACA. Tel: 0906 515 3020 Box 421375

SUZANNA, 45, lonely beautiful classy French lady looking for happy decent reliable very sexy man for lots of TLC and good times. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 424847 ☺

SARAH, young looking curvy 41yr old female, bored with everyday routines, WLTm up for some fun discreet and extremely broad minded younger male. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 424827 ☺

DEBBIE, 50, petite blonde looking for some fun and adventure with similar fun loving mature male. Looks unimportant. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 424799 ☺

CALL or text me, I'm Claire, single, 41yrs loves life to the full, hoping you will contact me if you want a genuine fun time. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 424779 ☺

SARAH, mature feminine lady, kind caring but still has a sensual side, hoping to meet like minded, confident, not smoking gent with GSOH, looking for a good time. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 424777 ☺

PROFESSIONAL lady, mid 60s, interests include gardening, theatre, walking, nights out and travelling, animal lover, looking for a professional gentleman, kind and caring, intellectual and outgoing, with gosh, for friendship possibly more, in the Stafford area. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 424569

Hi I'm Ellie, 39, pretty, funny, great figure, OHAC! child, have everything apart from a man, WLTm someone I wanna be with, not have to be. Call me. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 424635 ☺

ATTRACTIVE professional lady, 57, widow, likes dining out, country puns, good conversation and laughter, seeks genuine professional gent, with a gosh with similar interests, to enjoy life with. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 424157

ANDREA, 43, slim with long dark hair, blue eyes, loves to dance seeks romantic man to share intimate moments in or out. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 424747 ☺

DIVORCED female, attractive, sensual by nature, OHAC, bored with own company, looking to make life a little more exciting with like minded man. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 424591 ☺

JANE 40s, blonde blue-eyed petite build, WLTm understanding discreet tall, caring man for daytime meets. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 424769 ☺

JULIE attractive 35yr old female with a great body, looking for no strings attached evening meets. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 425037 ☺

JOSIE sexy black lady, 52yrs seeks adult times with concerning gent, any age, discreet clean, womanly figure. Text only Mailbox: 4028592 ☺

MARY, passionate honest slim blue-eyed blonde, 39yrs, likes nights in/out, looking for affectionate male, any age to spend adult fun times. Interested? call me. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 425009 ☺

ANNABELLE, sophisticated 28yrs hoping to meet older gent for adult fun, discreet, sincere, genuine advertiser. Text only Mailbox: 4157105 ☺

JACKIE, 56yrs, attractive lady who is lots of fun seeks like-minded gent for nights in, days out and much much more. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 424491 ☺

DONNA, 42, bright bubbly blue eyed blonde looking for someone to enjoy life and love to the full with. Call me. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 424873 ☺

MARY, professional mature lady, loves life, very sociable, and fun, seeks gent for good conversation and happy times. All calls and texts answered. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 424775 ☺

SUE, attractive genuine lady, own home, loves to spoil a man, give me a call or text. ACA. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 424673 ☺

JULIE, 53yrs, tall, slim, dark haired lady, sociable and fun loving, new to the area so WLTm men friends for fun, maybe good times. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 424497 ☺

SEXY brunette 39, petite, brown eyes, seeks energetic discreet guy for no strings fun and friendship. Age/status unimportant. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 424451 ☺

HEATHER, 48, well travelled solo brunette looking to share a large glass of wine and whatever follows with affectionate man friend. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 424429 ☺

TERRI, attractive young looking 29yrs, long legged sporty seeking nice man to fall in love with, up to 45yrs. If that's you pls call, you have nothing to lose. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 424377 ☺

PATRICIA, 50s, solvent female, tactile, fun, likes to travel, seeks tall, easygoing mature male to enjoy all the good things in life with. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 424553 ☺

BARBARA, 36, slim blonde, likes music, sport, the outdoors, quiet nights in etc, WLTm kind honest gent to share interests and get to know me. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 424549 ☺

HELEN, mid 50's naughty lady seeks some fun times with gent any age. ACA. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 424493 ☺

ANGELA, 48yrs, seeks male companion for nights out, dining, maybe more. ACA or text me. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 424495 ☺

TOM, 32, slim, attractive, own home, likes to eat out and in, WLTm honest, kind girl for tender, loving care and fun times. No timewasters please. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 424929 ☺

MALE, 64, single, n/s, likes music, films, driving, nights in, dining out, trips, WLTm lady, 50-70, looks unimportant, for friendship and relationship. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 424927 ☺

CARING male, 55, N/S, medium build, likes meals out, music, cinema, sports, driving, seeks female, 40-50 for friendship. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 239148

HONEST male, 60s, N/S, GSOH, car owner, seeks female, 55-70 for friendship, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 416817

MALE, 63, caring, easygoing, N/S seeks female 50-70 for friendship and romance. Looks unimportant. Likes occasional drink, eating in/out, cinema and driving. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 418893

47 year old guy, 5ft7, dark hair, blue eyes, likes DVDs, nights in and out, seeks female, 42-49, in Leamington Spa/Rugby area, for friendship and long term relationship. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 424325

IAN, 5ft8, medium build, OHAC, late 50s, likes most things, holidays, gardening, motorbikes, WLTm similar aged lady, 50-60, with nice personality. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 421345

MIKE 49, slim, young looks, seeks female, 35-50 for friendship and going out. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 356651

DAVE, 54, 5ft10, medium build, easy going, happy, looking for an attractive, loving and caring female, 45-65, for friendship and relationship. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 423073 ☺

YOUNG 70 widower, fit, lonely, 5ft 11ins, 11st, likes drives, walks, DIY, meals out, gardening, smoker, looking for lady to spend life with. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 424687 ☺

BIG is beautiful is larger is lovelier, Steve 58, seeking broad minded, adventurous BBW for fun times. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 412031

MARK 48, slim, fit, GSOH, looking for loyal partner for LTR. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 424679 ☺

REMEMBER: Calls cost £1.55 per minute plus your phone company's access charge. Texts cost £1.50 per message received.

CARING 55yr old male, widower, 6ft 3ins, WLTm lady, 40-55 for fun and laughter, maybe happy ever after. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 424677 ☺

MALE 57, attractive, seeks mature woman any age for close fun, married or single. Text only Mailbox: 5410860 ☺

BLACK male, ex-marine, 6ft11, would like to meet a lady, 30 or over, if you would like a night in or out, Birmingham area, give me a shout. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 424507 ☺

ADVENTUROUS 36-year-old male, slim, dark hair, likes music, cycling and photography, seeks female for friendship, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 417235 ☺

GENT 48, youthful outlook, likes countryside, keep fit, karaoke, seeks soul mate for fun times. N. Shropshire. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 408411

IAN, GSOH, 60, looking for somebody to go out with and have a good time, a good laugh, maybe things will move on, I'm young at heart so looking for younger female if possible. NSA. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 424357 ☺

RETIRED male seeking companionship maybe more. No time wasters. Text only Mailbox: 5542315 ☺

ITALIAN male, 46, from Oldbury, seeking female, 30-50, for friendship, possible relationship. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 424371 ☺

MALE, 59, 5ft2, looking for genuine lady, 50-55, to share the good things in life. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 424353

NICE old-fashioned gent, seeks kind, caring romantic lady for LTR. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 416905

TIM, young at heart, intelligent, fun loving, spontaneous, GSOH, WLTm a lady with a GSOH, for friendship and possibly more. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 424395 ☺

ATTRACTIVE, Tall and intelligent Black male 50, lower 20s and intelligent and nature seeks solvent lady of quality 50+ for romance. Text only Mailbox: 5561456 ☺

CHRISTIAN male 51, seeking Christian female, 35-45 for friendship, possibly more. Tel No: 0906 500 3724 Box No: 423747 ☺

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New Year gains for Verso and Auris

By Anthony Martyn

Toyota has introduced equipment upgrades for its new 2017 Verso and Auris models, with Verso also moving to new, refocused three-grade line-up.

Toyota has taken the opportunity to streamline the Verso line-up into three grades: Active, Icon and Design. The change has introduced plenty of premium features to the Design models, which top the new range.

The Design's high style quality is taken up another few notches with the addition of new 17-inch black alloy wheels and rear privacy glass, in addition to the standard-fit panoramic roof.

Top-end

In the cabin, part-leather upholstery is now part of the package, together with the latest top-end Toyota Touch 2 with Go multimedia, connectivity and navigation system. Controlled by a central touchscreen or by voice commands, this provides 3D map graphics, a text-to-speech function for text messages and connected services for better journey planning and local information. The deal includes three years of free map updates.

The specification of Icon models has also been raised with the addition of Smart Entry and push-button start, rain-sensing windscreen wipers, a new seat trim and sunshades for the rear doors.

Toyota Safety Sense remains standard on all Verso, providing extra protection against accidents with a Pre-Collision System with Forward Collision Warning and Autonomous



Toyota Safety Sense remains standard on all Verso models

Emergency Braking, Automatic High Beam and Lane Departure Alert.

Verso models come with an easily adaptable cabin which seats up to seven in three rows of seats; the entry-level Active model is available only as a five-seat vehicle.

The choice of powertrains for Verso Design now includes the 130bhp 1.6-litre Valvematic petrol engine with six-speed manual transmission, in addition to the 1.8-litre

Valvematic and 1.6-litre D-4D diesel units. Across the board, performance figures remain unchanged.

The British-built Toyota Auris takes an important step forward in terms of safety with the addition of Toyota Safety Sense as a standard package on all versions of the car – both hatchback and Touring Sports wagon – bar the entry-level Active grade, where customers can specify it as an option.



The British-built Auris takes an important step forward

The functions of the package can alert the driver to an imminent collision risk and help them take action to avoid or reduce the consequences if an impact does happen.

Auris's features match those of Verso, above, with the addition of Road Sign Assist, which recognises important warning and command signs on motorways and major routes and repeats them in clear graphics

in the driver's colour TFT multi-information display.

Design models are refreshed inside and out with the introduction of new-design 17-inch, 10-spoke alloy wheels and Alcantara cabin trim.

Leather seats can now be specified for Excel grade models as a factory-fit option. To round off the 2017 upgrades, there is a new exterior colour choice: Tokyo Red.

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13 (63) VAUXHALL MOKKA 1.7 CDTI exclusive, grey	£12,450
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Third-generation 1.8 litre gets more oomph

Power boost for the Mazda MX-5

Automotive tuning company BBR has released a new performance package for the third-generation 1.8-litre Mazda MX-5, which boosts power from 136bhp to 175bhp.

Called the BBR Super 175, the bolt-on upgrade also increases torque to 194Nm. It was developed using techniques BBR learnt on its popular Super 200 conversion for the more powerful 2.0-litre MX-5.

Commenting on the Super 175 performance package, BBR managing director Neil Mckay said: "Given the relatively high weight of the NC variants of the MX-5, these cars need as much help as they can get to satisfy the needs of the performance enthusiast, but with a priority on retaining everyday drive-ability from a smaller capacity engine.

"I am delighted to say that we have achieved these twin goals by utilising BBR's vast experience with normally aspirated tuning to deliver a wallet-friendly conversion with a minimal insurance loading."

In a similar vein to the Super 200 tuning package, the focus of the Super 175 upgrade is to improve the breathing on 1.8-litre engine. To achieve this, BBR developed a pair of exclusive camshaft profiles with unique lift and timing specifications that help to maximise the spread of power as well as peak brake horsepower.

Working in conjunction with a special tubular stainless steel exhaust manifold and a large-scale engine management system recalibration, the BBR Super 175 tuning package achieves impressive power gains from 3,000rpm, and exceeds standard power and torque outputs at every point in the rev range.

The Super 175 upgrade is fully UK MOT emissions compliant, and runs on both 98 and 95 octane rated petrol. The upgrade is priced at £1,995, which includes a full installation. A DIY version of the Super 175 tuning kit is also available for £1,595.

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Most extreme school run for Kodiah

British parents spend almost nine weeks of their lives ferrying kids to and from the school gates, according to new research from Škoda. And for many – over a third (36 per cent) of UK mums and dads – the 'school run' is the most stressful parental duty that they undertake.

However, whilst traffic (64 per cent) is the most common obstacle facing people on their daily commute, spare a thought for those living in the most remote parts of the UK. According to Škoda's study, in the furthest flung places such as the Scottish Highlands and Welsh Valleys, delays to school runs caused by hazards such as flooding rise by as much as 18 per cent against the national average (56 per cent vs 38 per cent).

Livestock on the roads also causes issues. In the county of Sutherland in the far north of Scotland, and in the mid Wales county of Ceredigion, an average of one in ten parents regularly has to stop to bypass rogue sheep and cattle – almost twice as often as any other rural location.

On the back of these figures, Škoda sought out the country's 'most extreme school run' – a nationwide search for the family facing the toughest terrain and obstacles – to put its brand new large SUV, the Kodiah, through its paces in the UK for the first time.

Step forward the Joneses, a farming family based in Pontrhydfendigaid, Ceredigion, Wales.

Nestled amongst stunning picture-postcard scenery, the Jones' land even features its own waterfall. However, despite beautiful appearances, their location also offers up problematic driving obstacles than cause



The children really enjoyed travelling in the Kodiah



The off-road route features mud and water crossings

the family delays of anywhere between ten minutes and two hours.

Dad William often has to use his chainsaw to help remove fallen trees, whilst ice and floods also present regular challenges – with a broken-down lorry blocking the road for two solid days last year. The Jones' cottage, Cwmmoiro, sits within its own micro-climate, meaning it can be snowing at home when it is raining at the children's school.

Mum Sarah Jones explained: "Every day

when we wake up we don't know what we're going to come up against on our school run, which is part of the fun of living up here really. We could take our horse Willow, but a 4x4 makes things so much easier."

Prior to its secretive arrival in Wales from the Czech Republic, the seven-seater Škoda Kodiah had completed over a million miles of testing in some of the most extreme climates around the world. In what was a typically wet and windy day in Pontrhydfendigaid,

that testing was the perfect preparation.

The Joneses got to experience the Kodiah's outstanding 4x4 functionality, cutting across the valley via a slippery off-road route that features lots of mud and water crossings.

Sarah Jones concluded: "We were hugely impressed with the Kodiah and our journey to school was the smoothest we've ever experienced. It tackled flooded areas and hills with ease and we enjoyed the headroom and nice little extras such as the heated seats. The

seven seats would definitely come in handy for collecting our children's school mates and when they're not being used, we can pop our dogs in the back. The kids really want us to buy one now!"

Watch the Jones' extreme school run here:

škoda.uk/ExtremeSchoolRun
Škoda's first seven-seater SUV will start from just £21,495 and will be available in four trim levels with five engine options, two and four-wheel drive, and manual or DSG gearboxes.

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No festive fun with five-goal drubbing

THERE was little seasonal cheer as FC Oswestry Town crashed 5-0 at home to promotion chasing Charnock Richard.

It meant they lose ground on their play-off rivals in the Hall-mark North West Counties League division one.

After suffering a 5-2 loss at impressive Prestwich Heys the week before – their first defeat after five straight victories – Town suffered another five-goal reverse, four of which came in the second half.

Life does not get any easier for Mike Barton's men who head to title chasing county rivals Whitchurch Alport on Boxing Day before hosting Sandbach United on New Year's Eve.

A 20th-minute goal from Mark Adams separated the sides at the break, before the Lancashire visitors took charge through quick-fire goals from Carl Grimshaw (58 minutes), Jonathan Hessian (59) and Spencer Bibby (62).

Towering forward Grimshaw completed the nap hand at Park Hall with his second of the game two minutes from time.

Learning

"They were very good all over the pitch, the best side we've played and I can see why they are title favourites," said boss Mike Barton.

"We are eighth, but there is a big gulf between us and the top sides, but we will keep building and learning."

Adams shot Charnock Richard into the lead after breaking down the left before firing into the bottom corner.

Despite creating few chances, Town were still in the hunt at the break and threatened early in the second period when Jack Harris made one god run down the right. But Harrison Millington was unable to get on the end of his cross.

However, once top scorer Grimshaw headed his first for the visitors, there was no way back for Town.

Their hopes faded further when keeper Richard Cowderoy was sent off for handling outside the box, with Harris taking the gloves.

The Oswestry side battled but, without key defenders Alun Morris and Harry Murphy, subsided in the second half with three goals conceded in the space of five minutes.

Keeper Cowderoy is set to miss the clash with Sandbach through his one match ban, leaving Barton worrying over who will step in.

Super Saints stretch away as Gap widens

FOOTBALL by John Bridgwater

Gap Connah's Quay 0 The New Saints 3
ANOTHER ruthless showing saw The New Saints tighten their stranglehold on the Dafabet Welsh Premier title race after sweeping aside closest rivals Gap Connah's Quay 3-0 at the Deeside Stadium.

The record breaking Saints made it 19 straight wins in the league, and 25 in all competitions, as they continued their march towards a seventh successive crown.

Victory took them 21 points clear at the top. The defending champions strolled to the points with ruthless efficiency, exploiting some slack defending from the home side.

A powerful strike from Scott Quigley after just four minutes separated the sides at the break, before Greg Draper broke through and slotted the second just two minutes into the second period. The points were in the bag once defender Connell Rawlinson fired in from close range inside the hour.

Boss Craig Harrison was naturally delighted. "It's been a tough week, with games on Saturday, Wednesday and Saturday, two of which have been on heavy pitches," he said. "But I thought the lads were fantastic, definitely one of our best performances of the season."

"Once we went 2-0 up, they had to come out, and became stretched. We had five players out with injury, so it shows what a strong squad we've got."

Connah's Quay manager Andy Morrison praised his players' efforts, but felt they paid the price for some slack defending.

Punished

"All three goals we conceded came from bad decisions, and we were punished," he said.

"But we kept going, had three or four chances, and we can take a lot of heart from what we have achieved this season."

TNS went ahead on just four minutes when Simon Spender's long ball eluded Wes Baynes and Quigley was left in space before smashing a stunning shot into the roof of the net.

Connah's Quay enjoyed their fair share of possession in the first half, with Les Davies heading well wide from a Nathan Woolfe cross while Nicky Rushton's shot drew a routine save from keeper Paul Harrison.

But hopes of a fightback faded just 90 seconds after the interval with another ball over the top. Baynes was again at fault, mistiming his challenge, which allowed Draper to slot his 11th goal of the season into the bottom corner.

Rawlinson fired the third on 58 minutes from close range after the home side had failed to deal with Ryan Brobbel's cross into the goalmouth.

Meanwhile, Newtown continue to flirt with the relegation places after suffering a 1-0 loss against Cardiff Met University at Latham Park.

Having climbed out of the bottom two with a 3-1 success at Rhyl the previous week, the Robins had their wings clipped by the students.

Chris Hughes' side succumbed to a second-half strike from Will Evans just past the hour which found the net off the underside of the bar.

The Robins also picked up three more injuries – Luke Boundford (hamstring) was forced off early, with Kieran Mills-Evans and striker Jason Oswell also hurt.

Newtown boss Chris Hughes felt his side deserved something for their efforts. "It had 0-0 written all over it," he said.

Runners are stepping out in style



Garry Owens, left, gets his marathon award from chairman Trevor Searle. Centre, president Jon Hancock with Star winner Liz Park and, right, Searle with fell racer Ian Lowe. Below, the group.



PAUL JONES and Alison Laverden retained their Rose Bowl trophies when Oswestry Olympians held their annual awards night.

The duo picked up several accolades during the presentation night, with the prestigious Rose Bowl going to the runners with the season's best times over half-marathon, 10k and 5k Times

are added together and the fastest total wins.

Other athletes to be recognised included Garry Owens, who took the first male marathon honour;

Ian Lowe and Ellen Ashton, who won the fell race championships, and Pete Butler who took the mens cross country award.

The coaches' accolade went to

Lou Williams for completing her first Iron Man triathlon on one of the toughest courses, in Tenby.

Liz Park received a Star award and recognition for her contribution to the club, while Richie Collins retained the multi-sports award on a night when chairman Trevor Searle and president Jon Hancock presented the awards.

Never mind the quality, feel the win

FOOTBALL by John Bridgwater

THE New Saints maintained their dominance of the Dafabet Welsh Premier after overcoming 10-man Rhyl 2-1 with a battling display at Belle Vue.

Despite falling behind in the first minute, the runaway leaders hit back with a brace from Alex Darlington, his second from the penalty spot, to stay a commanding 18 points clear at the top of the table.

"Rhyl was not a classic performance, but we again showed great determination and spirit to get a well-fought three points away from home," said boss Craig Harrison.

"We did not play well, and perhaps we should have done better playing against 10 men for an hour, but I'm not going to be too critical when you make it 18 wins out of 18.

"It was a poor game, with not much quality. We're a big scalp now, and it's got to the point that every team wants to be the first to beat us."

The Saints made a disastrous start when falling behind from the kick-off as ex-TNS striker Carl Lamb latched onto a stray back-pass before rounding keeper Paul Harrison and slotting into the net after just 27 seconds.

Buoyed by the breakthrough, Rhyl's Toby Jones brought a fine save from Harrison with a fierce vol-

ley. But the Saints were back on terms on 12 minutes when Greg Draper beat the offside flag and crossed for Darlington to tuck the ball into the net.

The visitors were fortunate when keeper Harrison made a hash of a Kristian Pierce corner, but somehow regained the ball.

Rhyl, hammered 10-0 by the Saints earlier in the season, were making a good fist of things but their hopes took a dive when keeper Owen Evans was sent off in the 33rd minute by referee Nick Pratt for handling outside the box.

TNS, however, struggled to make their one-man advantage count, and their plans were disrupted when Wes Fletcher was forced off early in the second period when stretching for a cross.

But the title favourites got their noses in front on the hour when replacement keeper Rory Crowther brought down substitute Scott Quigley, and Darlington forced home the spot-kick despite the debutant stopper getting a good hand to the ball.

The young Rhyl keeper then did well to keep out Darlington's volley on 67 minutes, and from the rebound Connell Rawlinson blasted over. Rhyl

attacked when they could, Tom Hartley making a great run down the left before Lamb flicked on his superb cross and Pierce blasted just over.

Crowther pulled off an astonishing double save to foil substitute Adrian Cieslewicz and Quigley before the hosts responded with substitute Jordan Miller thwarted by Harrison and Jones lashing over.

More Crowther heroics saw him block at Quigley's feet.

TNS could not kill off their opponents and were relieved not to concede an 86th-minute equaliser when Lamb made a weak connection on Oliver Buckley's low cross, Harrison gathering easily.

Meanwhile, the Welsh Premier League will continue with its 12-team format after a motion to increase the number to 16 next season failed to gain support at meeting of the FAW Council. The league said an "overwhelming majority" of member clubs wish to continue with a maximum of 12.

The league was cut from 18 to 12 in 2010 when founder members Caerswys and Connah's Quay were relegated to the Cymru Alliance, along with Cefn Druids, Porthmadog, Rhyl and Welshpool.

But the format is not popular with fans who find as many as six games against the same opponents, depending on cup draws, a stale offering.

Supporter takes aim with Llan a bit Short

WITH high-flying Churchstoke's clash with Castle Caereinion called off, the rest of the Montgomeryshire & District Airgun League teams were looking to seize their chance to make up ground on the leaders.

But the story of the week came when a much depleted Llanfair team travelled to The Cock to take on Forden in a vital match at the foot of the table.

Forden are struggling to find consistency while Llanfair have problems with a lack of shooters.

So much so that the visitors, fielding just four shooters, had to register one of their supporters to shoot on the night.

Their regulars of DT Williams, N Lloyd, D Tooser and G Roberts, with some fine shooting, managed to gain a 16.3 point advantage.

Rob Short, who had never shot target before, posted a 28.2 score. Under league rules the lowest scoring of the five shooters steps up to the mark again to make the sixth. On went Short once more to land another 28 – and help Llanfair take the match 191.7-181.4.

Current third-place side Ard-leen entertained Newtown at The Horseshoe, and did not disappoint as they produced a team of the week performance.

Although shooting very well themselves with a score of 195.1, the Newtown side were left wondering what had hit them having witnessed a masterpiece in Bell target shooting by the home side.

Record

Out of the six scoring shooters, the home side managed four possibles and one maximum through young Jack Francis (35.2), Sarah Davies (35.4), Nick Parr (35.4), Martin Pearce (35.6) and Richard Lewis, with his maximum of 35.7.

Glyn Jones completed the scoring with 33.3, culminating in a total score of 210.6, which is a possible league record.

Second-placed Guilsfield A entertained Crew Green A at the Kings Head in the match of the week. With Crew Green virtually back to their best, this proved to be a fantastic tussle.

After the first four shooters had let fly the teams could not be split with both on 129.6, Guilsfield's Dan Pritchard recording a 35.3 possible.

Shooting at five, Nigel Kelton just got the better of Roger Knight to put Crew Green 1.3 point ahead.

Then came the pairing of the match, Paul Phillips (Guilsfield) against Crew Green's Dave Morgan. Shot for shot they went, Phillips recording a maximum 35.7 but with Morgan also recording a possible of 35.2 and losing by 0.5, Crew Green held on for victory by just 0.8 of a point.

Another tight match took place at the Old School House, where Guilsfield B entertained Crew Green B.

With both teams in mid-table, valuable points were up for grabs between two very closely matched rivals.

The home side took an early lead, but consistent scoring by the visitors' tail end saw them claw themselves back into the match and eventually take it by only 0.9 of a point, 193.1-192.2.

Shooters of the week were Guilsfield's Paul Phillips and Ardleen's Richard Lewis for their maximum scores of 35.7.

TNS Ladies earn a point

TNS LADIES ended the year in fourth position in the FA Women's Premier League Midlands division one after their 2-2 draw at Long Eaton United Ladies.

Goals by top scorer Emily Ridge and Charlotte Canlett gave the Saints a useful point away from home.

The match ended a creditable first half of the campaign.

However, despite their fourth position, the Saints will keep a wary eye over their shoulders with four sides just one point below them in a congested table.

Defeat was what we deserved – Stephens

LLANFAIR UNITED found themselves dragged back towards the basement park in the Huws Gray Cymru Alliance after going down 3-1 at Gresford Athletic

Rhys Lloyd gave the Latics a seventh-minute lead, but Daniel Jones levelled eight minutes before half-time when converting a cross from Andrew Hughes to boost Llanfair's hopes.

However, lively substitute Simon Smith restored the home advantage on 75 minutes before Jack Challoner sealed the win with a penalty four minutes later after Matthew Spencer had been sent off handling on the line.

Defeat left Llanfair lying 11th in the table and looking over their shoulders at several of the sides below them.

"We got what we deserved," admitted boss Rhys Stephens. "They were on top in the first half, we came back into it, and the second half looked like petering out."

"But they brought on a substitute, who made a difference, and they scored two goals in quick succession."

Injury-hit GUILDSFIELD failed to close the gap on the leaders as they succumbed 2-1 at Holyhead Hotspur where they were left frustrated by refereeing decisions.

Despite taking the lead through Louis Irvine just before half-time, hopes of returning from Anglesey with some reward were thwarted after the break.

Thwarted

Just three minutes into the second period Corey Jones levelled matters before Gavin Shape netted the winner nine minutes from time, with the Guils now slipping down to seventh.

Meanwhile, CAERSWS' poor home returned to haunt them as they also lost ground on the pace-setters with a 2-1 reverse against Mold Alex at the Recreation Ground.

Looking to cement third spot, the Bluebirds carved out a string of good chances, only to be thwarted by good goalkeeping and wasteful finishing. They did lead on the hour when Iwan Lewis fired home after his first effort had been blocked. Will Thomas spurned a golden opportunity from eight yards, and Mold made the most of their chances.

Alex Weatherby levelled after the hosts switched off from a short corner, and Sam Richardson fired the winner from 25 yards. It was the fifth defeat at home for the Bluebirds this season.

Fixtures, Tuesday, Dec 27, Huws Gray Cymru Alliance (2.30pm): Buckley Tn v Prestatyn Tn, Gresford Ath v Mold Alex (2pm), Caernarfon Tn v Porthmadog, Conwy Boro' v Holyhead Hotspur, Guilsfield v Caersws, Llanfair Utd v Penrhyncoch (2pm), Holywell Tn v Flint Tn Utd, Ruthin Tn v Denbigh Tn (2pm).

Wem looking to kick on in the new year

WEM TOWN boss Josh Gough wants his side's 2-0 win at Old Wulfrunians to act as a springboard for an upturn in fortunes in the West Midlands League first division.

Goals from Chris Peel and Jack Gaddes sealed a fourth victory in 20 league games this season for the north Shropshire club, whose next challenge is a trip to Wrens Nest on New Year's Eve.

"Hopefully this will kick us on," said Gough. "It was a good performance and a good result."

"Chris Peel was the oldest player in our side at 25, so it looks good for the future if we can stick together."

Gough added: "It's been tough at times this season but days like this one are really rewarding."

Peel fired Wem in front when he found the bottom corner of the net.

Gaddes doubled the advantage in the second half when he beat a couple of players and tried his luck with a shot which found its way past the home keeper.

Joy as Oswestry grab their first points

OSWESTRY'S rugby players picked up their first points of the season in the South Lancs and Cheshire One when drawing 15-15 at home to Southport.

After suffering a slender 25-16 loss at Widnes to remain adrift at the foot of the table, their 12th defeat in a row, the Eagles finally halted the slide with a well-earned draw at Granville Park.

It was a revitalised Os side who started strongly with plenty of ball from rucks.

Nick Clay, man of the match at scrum-half, kept the backs on the front foot as their surprised visitors were forced to defend stoutly.

The Eagles were ahead when fly-half Ryan Sorrell gave quick ball to Andy Merrett who released the backs. Andrew Aiono offloaded to flying winger Dan

Morgan to go over in the corner for an unconverted try.

With Oswestry holding the upper hand, No.8 Richard Owen pushed his men forward in the mauls.

Another mistake by the opposition led to a penalty which was kicked by Luca Owen Youens for 8-0.

However, following a driving maul, a slick Southport move saw the ball pushed out to the winger for a converted try to reduce the arrears to a point.

Oswestry were undaunted and opened up a 15-7 lead with a converted penalty try.

Winger Morgan chased a sweet kick from Sorrell to the corner and was adjudged to have been held back off the ball.

Oswestry's lead was trimmed to 15-12 at the break

when a lucky bounce from a high kick saw the visitors' winger touch down.

The second half saw both teams go toe to toe with four yellow cards – two apiece – under the new law for high tackles.

Both sides had penalties, but Southport landed one kick to level matters at 15-15.

"At long last a result which we deserved," said coach Dan Samuels.

"It could have gone either way, but we're up and running. Congratulations to Nick Clay on his Llan-yard Bowlder man of the match performance."

OSWESTRY II won 39-24 at Northwich III to go ninth in the Freshet North West League Division Four South.

COBRA strike to ease fears of relegation

RUGBY UNION

COBRA hoisted themselves out of the bottom two in rugby's North Wales League division one with a crucial 31-13 success at home to close rivals Colwyn Bay.

The Meifod men had slipped into basement trouble with a 32-15 reverse at fellow strugglers Ruthin on top of an 80-7 hammering at high-flying Nant Conwy.

But they got back on track with victory against a side two places above them in the table, and picked up a bonus point in the process after running in four converted tries.

They now take a festive break before resuming hostilities at home to fifth-placed Bala on Saturday, January 7.

COBRA were under no illusions about the importance of the Bay clash.

Despite a bright start, they fell behind to a penalty awarded for a high tackle, but hit back with a good running try from inside their own half as Sion Wyn Williams broke down the right before feeding full-back Richard Jones to touch down under the posts, fly-half Will Worthington converting.

Ambulance

The two sides then exchanged penalties, with youth teamer Worthington on target, before a second try gave COBRA a 17-6 lead. A crunching tackle from centre Frazer Roberts saw the ball spill loose and Iwan Vaughan picked up before Wyn Williams was put clear to score, again under the posts with Worthington converting.

In making the tackle Roberts was left unconscious and was later taken to hospital by ambulance. Subsequent x-rays showed no fractures.

COBRA were then caught cold as Bay pulled back a try to trail just 17-13 at the interval.

However, the hosts went over for a third try after a spell of pressure close to the visitors' line. Prop Bryn Edwards powered over, with Worthington converting. Hooker Steve Isaac added a fourth try from a driving maul, Worthington adding the extras. COBRA have moved up to third bottom, five points above basement rivals Ruthin who went down 17-5 at Mold.

WELSHPOOL cemented fifth spot in the North Two East with a 23-0 success at lowly Rhos, making it three wins in four outings.

The Maesydre men have proved a competitive force recently, winning 20-19 at Flint, and 28-26



Dotting down – winger Sion Wyn Williams scores the second try, watched by full-back Richard Jones

against promotion chasing Llanidloes before a 26-19 loss at home to unbeaten Llangollen last week.

With the hosts fielding a strengthened line-up, Pool had to work hard for their 11-0 interval lead. Full-back Tom Williams kicked a brace of penalties before flanker Lee Richards went over for an unconverted score five minutes before the break. Prop Ryan Manuel extended the advantage with a try and scrum-half and captain Joe Stranks also crossed, Williams

chipping in with a conversion. Pool return to action with a juicy clash at home to Wrexham on January 7.

Meanwhile, Welshpool's youngsters went down 22-7 to Bethesda in the North Wales Youth League division two.

Prop Morgan Davies scored a try in the first half, converted by fly-half and captain Dan Earle to reduce the arrears to 10-7. However, Bethesda edged ahead in a scrappy and feisty second period.

Kelly eyes the winner as Llan push on

FOOTBALL by John Bridgwater

first 18 minutes through Richard Powell's brace either side of an Ashley Jones strike.

But the visitors stormed back with goals from Gregg Brown, Richie Evans, Peter Rees and Colin Reynolds to lead before Mark Davies levelled for the Red Kites.

Carno, however, were not to be denied as Ioan Humphreys pounced for the winner to sentence Rhayader to their second league defeat of the season. Victory cemented Carno's third spot and they are now six points off top with two games in hand.

Rhayader's defeat meant title rivals BERRIEW, who had no game, remain top on goal difference. At the other end of the table, MONTGOMERY continue to prop up the table after their 3-0 home loss to Llanidloes Town. Josh Matthews fired the Daffs into an interval lead from a fine pass by Rob Bumford, and substitute Joe Evans doubled the lead soon after the break.

With just one win this term, Monty's fate was sealed when Matthews bagged his second with a low 20-yarder.

WELSHPOOL remain deep in trouble, just one place above Montgomery, after slumping 3-0 at home to Hay St Mary's.

Steve Morgan fired Hay into a first-half lead, before Adi Lawford and Brendan Hackett sealed Pool's fate after the break.

Elsewhere, Aberaeron consolidated fourth after seeing off Knighton Town 2-0 with goals from Gareth Severs and Tom Jones, while Llandrindod Wells were 3-1 winners at Machynlleth.

Meanwhile, Brecon Northcote threw the Watson Financial Mid Wales League (South) title race wide open with a 4-3 verdict over leaders Talgarth Town.

Joel Evans won it for Northcote with a contentious late penalty and it was a family affair with brothers Corey (2) and Craig netting earlier.

Llanidloes Town Reserves are second after Rhys Evans bagged a hat-trick in their 6-1 derby success over St Harmon. Francis Barr, Adrian Foulkes and Lee Vaughan were also on target while Ryan Addison replied for the Swifts with a free-kick.

Newcastle beat Rhayader Town Reserves 3-1 at home. Jack Kennett and Craig Morris gave Newcastle a 2-0 lead; Paul Dyke reduced the deficit for the league champions but Matt Jones sealed it.

Latest golf returns from Shropshire golf clubs

HENLE PARK

Christmas 4BBB: R Clarke & I Griffiths 45pts; A Hardy & D Williams 43pts; D Hughes & P Muir 42pts (cb).

666 Comp (Overall): G Sutton, J Harris, B Morris & R Morris; M Taylor, M Higginson, G Taylor & J Evans; J Athay, I Harris, R Harris & M Jones.

Medal: D Phillips, N Barber, T Phillips & C Forsyth; C Jones, D Lawlor, C Andrews & J Andrews; J Williams, R Jones, S Heathcock & P Muir.

Stableford: G Owen, C Roberts, B Hones & K Lloyd-Jones; Mr Captain J Fenn, R Smith, T Davies & E Williams; L Hayes, D Kellett, B Edwards & A Harris.

Texas: J Humphreys, S Ridge, M Welch & J Macted; C Rogers, T Hughes, D Wilshae & T Rogers; M Brand, C Hughes, A Edwards & J Dimelow.

Men's nearest the pin: R Jones.

Ladies & Mens Nearest the Pin 1: A Edwards

Ladies' Texas nearest the pin in 2: D Edwards

Tinsel Comp: S Sims & C Carpenter 27pts; K Gleave & P Oliver 26pts.

Seniors' Turkey Trot Division 1: C Vernal 41pts; M Morris 10pts. Division 2: M Cunningham 42pts; C Parker 40pts.

LEOMINSTER

3 Man Walter: G Moran (20), C Maddox (24) & J Cook (19) 79pts; D Rocke (12), A Morris (16) & J Ingram (8) 77 pts (cb); A Roberts (17), W Gore (13) & S Fletcher (12) 77pts.

December Stableford Division 1: K Gibbons (4) 27pts; S Fletcher (12) 27pts; R Brotherhood (10) 23pts. Division 2: G Lloyd (17) 32pts; J Morris (13) 32pts; M Houchin (16) 29pts (cb). Division 3: J Callow (20) 32pts; M Powell (26) 31pts; P Lane (22) 30pts.

Beast 3 Man Stableford: K Gibbons (4), D Stephens (11) & T Davies (18) 88pts; C Bel (17), P Merrick (19) & P Lewis (20) 83pts; D Jones (11), G Lloyd (17) & E Rookledge (24) 79pts.

Seniors' November Stableford Division 1: D Jones (11) 34pts; D Botwood (14) 32pts; V Fish (13) 29pts. Division 2: I Robertson (18) 39pts; M Williams (20) 31pts (cb); K Rivers (17) 31pts (cb). Division 3: M Barrington (24) 33pts; T Carver (23) 29pts; T Perry (23) 28pts (cb). Twos: T Carver, B Harris, D James, V Fish & J Finney.

December Stableford Division 1: I Fraser (11) 31pts; T Richards (13) 30pts; B Harris (14) 25pts. Division 2: P Green (16) 33pts; B Leach (18) 30pts; R Garvey (16) 27pts (cb). Division 3: D James (22) 30pts; R Harris (21) 29pts; B Holloway (23) 26pts. Twos: D James & D Langford (19).

Christmas Capers: I Robertson (17) 39pts; A Hooper (12) 37pts; M Clark (20) 35pts. Twos: B Gerbez (20) & V Fish (13).

MARKET DRAYTON

Ladies' December 9 Hole Competition 1: V Huntbach (28) 15pts; A Innocent (34) 14pts; J Lawson (31) 7pts.

Foursomes: H Dickson & J Harris 66.0; J Barker & J Sloan 68.5; S Powell & B Yendole 73.0; A Addison & Brady 75.0.

Three Person AM-AM Stableford: J Barker (20), S Cushing (12), B Roberts (27) 54pts; P Chinnock (23), M Playfair (23), B Yendole (21) 51pts; J Sloan (15), A Watkins (17), J Wilson (16) 47pts; F Bowers (32), L Lewis (32), S Powell (23) 47pts.

OSWESTRY

Canadian Greensomes Medal: P Huxley & S Roberts 59.4; S Harris & I Pearce 62.4; J Harris & J Poole 63.2; M Jones & J Taylor 63.6; Paul Pardoe & Philip Pardoe 64.0; T Taylor & R Burnett 64.8.

Ladies' Lady Captain's Drive-In - Mrs Jo Davies Front 9: S Weaver 19pts on back 6 from M Green 19pts (cb); B Bebbington 17pts (bk 9).

Back 9: M Alford 20pts; J Foster 17pts (cb) on back 3 from G Woolham 17pts (cb).

SHREWSBURY

Ladies' Christmas Shotgun Nine Hole Stableford Walter Front 9: J Evans, F Stokes, J Cox 36pts; S Band, M Burge, J Hughes 33pts; G Ferguson, M Cooke, P Holbrow 31pts.

Back 9: S Pritchard, H Fabian, K George 35pts; L Harding, M Adams, S Townsend 35pts; J Fryer, A Jones, P Henshaw 33pts (ocf); S Haw, A Edgington, M Harris 33pts.

Hat-tricks at the double in Ellesmere win

ELLESMERE RANGERS strikers Adam Jones and Will Twyford both rattled in hat-tricks as the Beech Grove men hammered Smethwick 7-0.

Christian Oldham also weighed in as Rangers delivered a dominant display to sign off their West Midlands League premier division fixtures for 2016 in style.

Boss Richard Brown, whose side will resume their season at Willenhall Town on January 7, was delighted with Ellesmere's efforts and praised the contribution of his sharp-shooting front two.

Brown said: "I was expecting a tough game but it was a great result, especially considering the players we had missing. I was the only sub we had but the lads out in an absolutely superb performance."

"It was only Adam's second start for us and he took his goals very well."

Rangers are currently fifth in the table, with Brown hoping his side can continue to keep climbing.

He added: "We're fifth in the league with a game in hand on the two teams directly above us."

"If we win that then we will go up to third."



Better times on the way – Samuels



Oswestry's Lanyard Bowdler man of the match Nick Clay

COACH Dan Samuels says Oswestry can look to brighter times ahead after gaining their first points in rugby's South Lancs and Cheshire One.

It has been a tough first half of the season for the Eagles who, following their promotion to a higher level, suffered 12 straight defeats to fall adrift at the foot of the table.

But they halted the slump with a morale-boosting 15-15 draw at home to a seasoned Southport side in a performance that augurs well for the second half of the campaign.

Having brought in a number of new faces in recent weeks, the Eagles have shown they can hold their own after picking up two welcome points.

"We went toe to toe, arm to arm, and it was a great battle," said Samuels. "The players proved how good they are to draw with a side that have won seven games in this highly competitive league. They now have the chance to go on and do great things after Christmas."

"By working harder in training, and becoming a close unit, there is no reason why the team cannot achieve survival and also potentially challenge the mid-table teams for positions – not to mention having a cup run."

The Eagles return to action in the New Year with a trip to Liverpool St Helens on Saturday, January 7.

Across the border, it was also a good weekend for COBRA who boosted their survival hopes in the North Wales League division one with a crucial 31-13 success at home to Colwyn Bay.

COBRA have moved up to third bottom, five points above basement rivals Ruthin who went down 17-5 at Mold.

They look to keep up the good work in their next outing at home to fifth-placed Bala on January 7.

WELSHPOOL also ended on a high by cementing fifth spot in the North Two East with a 23-0 success at lowly Rhos.

Pool return to action with a juicy clash at home to Wrexham on January 7 as they look to continue their improvements in the league.

TNS CHASING NEW RECORD

FOOTBALL by John Bridgwater

RECORD breakers The New Saints have more milestones in their sights as they look to maintain their dominance of the Dafabet Welsh Premier with a festive double against lowly Cefn Druids.

The Saints have soared a staggering 21 points clear at the summit after their comprehensive 3-0 victory at second-placed Gap Connah's Quay – their 19th straight win in the league.

That saw them break the all-time British record for top-flight league wins from the start of a season, beating the previous best of 18 set by Glasgow Rangers back in 1898-99.

The latest success kept the Saints on course to overtake Celtic's 25 straight league wins set in 2003 and 2004, although this record did not apply from the very start of that season as The Hoops drew their first SPL game 0-0 at Dunfermline.

Worryingly for their rivals, TNS boss Craig Harrison promises no let-up as the defending champions look to wrap up a seventh successive league crown in record time.

They now have two encounters against the struggling Druids, the first on Boxing Day at Park Hall (2.30pm) before making the return trip to the Rock the following Friday (December 30, 7.45pm).

Basement

Having already reeled off 25 straight wins in all competitions, the Saints are now in sight of Dutch club Ajax's record of 26 between October 3, 1971 and March 29, 1972.

With the Ancients languishing in the basement places, the Saints are firm favourites to reach the new landmark – but Harrison will be taking nothing for granted.

"We want to win every game, that is the challenge. We certainly will never be sick of winning," he said. "Whether we are 21 points clear, 10, nine or just one, the hunger and desire is still there."

"Every game is a challenge, whoever you are playing, and the Ancients will be another tough one for us as they are fighting for their lives. They need to pick up every point they can as they want to survive in the league."

"This will present a different challenge than when you are playing teams near the top like Connah's Quay."

"But we have an excellent group of players. We had five or six out against Gap, we've been shuffling players about, we had (defender) Phil Baker playing in midfield, but it goes to show just what a strong squad we've got."

Wes Fletcher, Chris Seargeant, Jon Routledge and Jamie Mullan are fitness worries, while Robbie Parry is a certain non-starter following a recent operation.

The Druids actually played their early games at Park Hall while a 3G pitch was being installed at their Rock base.

TNS will cut the entry cost for the Boxing Day game to £5, with pensioners and children free.

Davies doubles up on day one



Jo Davies flanked by retiring ladies captain Margaret Green, left, and 2017 vice-captain Marie Male

NEW Oswestry Golf Club ladies captain Jo Davies had a busy day of it when driving into office.

After she had smacked her shot down the fairway, the club staged a mixed competition – and Davies presented the prizes with new men's captain Neil Brogden.

The competition was similar to foursomes, with the men driving off the first tee and then alternating with the ladies.

There was a combined handicap allowance of 5/12 with the competition played over 15 holes, omitting the 11th, 12th and 13th in order to

finish in daylight. There were 46 pairs taking part, and 36 prizes.

The winners were Alex Richardson and Sarah Weaver, who received the Doug Humphreys Cup from his wife, Babs.

The day was organised by Ann and Campbell Colquhoun and members also enjoyed a Christmas roast afterwards.

Results: 1 Alex Richardson & Sarah Weaver (54 6/12), 2 Stephen Jones & Kath Jones (55 2/12), 3 Steve Ashworth (vice-captain) & Marie Male (lady vice-captain) (55 3/12), 4 Simon & Vicky Pound (56 5/12).



Fore! Ladies captain for 2017, Jo Davies, drives into office at Oswestry Golf Club

Llanrhaeadr on their way to the Valley

IN-FORM Llanrhaeadr have been drawn away to Radnor Valley in the quarter-finals of the Spar Mid Wales League Cup.

Llan are going well at the moment, having beaten leaders Rhayader Town and Bow Street in recent weeks to move up to seventh and have games in hand on the teams above.

High-flying Berriew, 15 games unbeaten, host Bow Street in another of the last eight ties, a side they defeated 3-0 in the league recently.

Elsewhere, Carno head to Dolgellau in their quarter-final and Rhayader Town welcome local rivals Llandrindod Wells.

Draw: Radnor Valley v Llanrhaeadr, Dolgellau v Carno, Berriew v Bow Street, Rhayader v Llandrindod Wells. Ties to be played in March 2017.

Meanwhile, Berriew hot shot Richard Davies is the runaway leader in the Spar Mid Wales League division one goal charts with 22, 19 in the league and three in the cup.

Team-mate Karl Selaerts is his nearest challenger with 14 league goals, along with Carno's Peter Rees (12 league, two cup).

Llanrhaeadr marksman Iwan Matthews, last season's leading goal getter, is having another fruitful season with 13 goals (10 and three).

Meanwhile, Llanstffraid Village striker Nathan Prodder heads the second division charts with 16 (14 and two).

Churchstoke's Max McLaughlin has 12 goals (seven and five) while David Anthony (Abermule) and Kerry's Luke Mumford have both netted nine.

League action resumes on Boxing Day with Berriew looking to maintain pole position at home to Montgomery. Llanrhaeadr face a crunch trip to third-placed Carno and joint leaders Rhayader Town visit in-form Llandiloos Town.

In the second division, Llanstffraid Village are away to Four Crosses and Dyffryn Banw welcome Churchstoke.

Barton bags forward – but misses Jones

FORWARD Richard Williams-Cooke has joined FC Oswestry Town – but boss Mike Barton has missed out in his bid to sign up Llandiloos Town's Steve Jones.

Williams-Cooke, 36, arrives with plenty of experience, with his previous clubs including Denbigh Town, Ruthin Town, Chirk AAA and Newtown.

He was also manager at Denbigh Town.

Oswestry return to action in the Hall-mark North West Counties League division one with a tough trip to county rivals Whitechurch Alport on Boxing Day before hosting Sandbach United on New Year's Eve.

The Oswestry side will want to bounce back from last Saturday's 5-0 home beating by promotion chasing Charnock Richard as they bid to consolidate their top eight position.

They will still be without influential defender Alun Morris, while keeper Richard Cowderoy is set to miss the New Year's Day clash with Sandbach through suspension after being sent off for handling outside the box against Charnock Richard.

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